

FOR SCOTLAND'S COLLEGE SECTOR

# reach



2021



## PROTECTING OUR PLANET

Staff and students from one college have come together to tackle the Climate Emergency p12



## WHOLE-COLLEGE WELLBEING

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the whole college community p46



# DIGITAL LEARNING

College learning and teaching is embracing digital delivery as never before



# reach

2021

## Editor

Wendy Grindle  
wendy.grindle@cdn.ac.uk

## Assistant Editor

Tina Koenig  
tina.koenig@cdn.ac.uk

Thank you to all contributors and those who helped to put this edition of *Reach* magazine together.

## Front Cover

Colleges have embraced digital delivery as never before... read about some of the key learning on page 16.

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**CONNECT**  
ENGAGEMENT IS EVERYTHING

Studio 2001, Mile End  
12 Seedhill Road  
Paisley PA1 1JS

Tel: 0141 561 0300  
Web: [www.connectcommunications.co.uk](http://www.connectcommunications.co.uk)



College Development Network  
Airthrey Castle  
University of Stirling  
FK9 4LA

E-mail: [info@cdn.ac.uk](mailto:info@cdn.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.cdn.ac.uk](http://www.cdn.ac.uk)

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LISTEN TO THIS WELCOME  
BY JIM METCALFE,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CDN

# WELCOME

Welcome to the 2021 issue of *Reach*, the magazine for Scotland's college sector. This interactive edition of *Reach* is our biggest issue yet and is filled with stories about inspirational practice and innovation.

I hope you find the content not only thought-provoking but also helpful as we continue to adapt to different ways of working in difficult times.

Find out more about CDN's three new team members on page 4 and turn to page 6 to read the great news about three existing CDN Leads who have recently become recognised TQFE lecturers.

We're delighted to have an opinion piece from NUS Scotland President Matt Crilly. He makes the case for more student support on page 10.

Meanwhile, City of Glasgow College's Head of Facilities Management tells us how college staff and students are coming together to tackle climate change on page 12.

Turn to page 16 for our digital learning feature, which includes an article about a pedagogy-first approach to digital learning and teaching, by West Lothian College Principal and Chief Executive Jackie Galbraith. This feature also presents excellent examples of online delivery from West Highland College UHI, Dundee & Angus College and Ayrshire College. Find out about the online teaching methods these lecturers will continue to use when the time comes to return to the college classroom.

On page 24, Dr Nighet Riaz from Advance

HE writes about the vital conversations that are happening to address racism in Scotland's college sector. She argues the case for addressing the issue of racism and the need for open, honest conversations about it.

Turn to page 28 to find out how the college sector will play a critical role in post-COVID recovery, working more closely with employers.

There are many more inspiring articles, so please do look inside! I really hope you enjoy reading this edition. Please get in touch to let me know what you think and what else you would like to see included in future editions of *Reach*.

The CDN team and I look forward to working with you in 2021 and we are proud to support you and the college sector. 🌟

# ROUND-UP



Jonny Rees



Gordon Hunt



Dougie Smith

## New faces at CDN

We are delighted to welcome three new faces to the CDN team. Jonny Rees is CDN's new Head of Professional Development. He has worked in the college and further education sector since 2007 and joins us from Newcastle College, where he was Head

of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

Gordon Hunt has been appointed as CDN's interim (maternity cover) Head of Leadership, Governance and Research. Gordon has many years of education system experience, as a senior leader with the Robertson Trust and

the University of the West of Scotland.

Our newest member of the team is Dougie Smith who joins CDN as National Research and Improvement Manager. Dougie is a former teacher and previously worked at NUS Scotland.

**VIRTUAL COLLEGE EXPO 2021**  
 COMING TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU!  
 #COLLEGEEXPO21

## COLLEGE EXPO 2021

Virtual College Expo 2021 will take place in June 2021. College Expo is Scotland's landmark event for everyone involved in post-16 education and training. It is a celebration of college excellence, and our national focus for staff development and practical innovation. Find out more at [www.cdn.ac.uk/college-expo](http://www.cdn.ac.uk/college-expo)

## Leadership: the latest from CDN

*Gordon Hunt, CDN's interim Head of Leadership, Governance and Research, tells us what to look out for from CDN's Leadership and Governance team in 2021.*

Effective leadership is always important, and never more so than in these challenging times for our colleges. In response to this, we have moved our Emerging Leadership and Strategic Leadership programmes fully online and the latest cohorts are well under way, taking advantage of our virtual platforms to support aspiring managers and senior leaders to obtain CMI qualifications and build their leadership skills. Keep an eye out for recruitment for the next cohorts later in the year.

Mindful of the need to provide more targeted support to our operational managers at this time, we have also introduced a coaching programme, supported by a resource bank, and participants will be nominated by their colleges to participate. The resource bank will provide access to programmes comprising short 'bursts' with helpful guidance, alternative approaches and

suggestions for leading and managing in the current context.

We have also restructured our Preparing for Executive Leadership programme to allow us to commence delivery to the second cohort with some exciting new elements. More news on that will come in the spring, as will information on the applications for the next cohort.

In November we launched our Get into Governance programme for aspiring board members. This exciting new programme offers six online, self-paced modules that will help you to prepare for taking on a board role and contributing to the success of an organisation that you care about.

We are also expanding our online training resources for existing board members with a new suite of online, self-paced modules in various aspects of governance launching in the spring.

**Check out all our leadership and governance resources on the [CDN website](http://cdn.ac.uk), as we develop and extend our support for great leadership across the sector in 2021.**



# Working together

During this year of extraordinary challenge and difficulty, we have worked closely with the college sector to put in place alternative assessment arrangements to meet the needs of learners and, at the same time, continue to develop our offer to the sector.

We have met frequently with college colleagues through our SQA/College Quality Focus Group, who have worked with us on the approach to adaptations.

These focus on providing learners with the best opportunities to continue their learning, while providing flexibility to colleges, given the challenges they face in the current environment.

College lecturing staff across Scotland work in partnership with us in a number of roles, including qualification development and quality assurance.

This session they have supported our qualification teams by providing subject expertise to facilitate assessment adaptations that continue to meet standards.

SQA thanks all college staff for their continuing help and support in dealing with the challenges which continue to face us all in session 2020-21.

Over the last few months, key stakeholders have worked together to develop a number of necessary changes to the assessment and quality assurance procedures for Higher National and vocational qualifications in 2020-21.

SQA and Colleges Scotland continue to work productively, and positive discussions are ongoing to confirm an agreed assessment contingency approach for 2020-21, that takes into account the different operating environment in which colleges and other centres are currently working, and maintains the integrity of certification.

The new HNVC 2021 Group is currently confirming an assessment approach for 2021. The group includes representation from key HNVC stakeholders and is chaired by Fiona Robertson, SQA Chief Executive.

SQA is fully committed to the college sector across Scotland and we look forward to continuing to work with you in 2021.

**You can keep up to date with the latest developments for this session on the [Qualifications guidance 2020-21](#) section of our website.**

## THE HUB

We are also currently in the process of launching the SQA Centre Hub, which will provide an easy way for centres to upload Quality Assurance evidence and access useful guides, templates and updates.

The SQA Co-ordinator in your centre will receive terms and conditions to sign up and, when completed, will receive a username and password to access the system – and we can provide access to others in your centre on request. A short video guide is available on the Hub to guide you through the new system.



# LEARNING TO BREATHE UNDERWATER

**Jonny Rees, CDN's Head of Professional Development, reflects on the impact of 2020 and explains what's on offer from CDN in 2021**

**When discussions to the tune of moving all teaching online for a sustained period of time became very real back in March 2020, my former Principal at Newcastle College shared the following analogy: 'Our teachers are going to have to learn to breathe underwater.' And that they did – very well!**

As a sector, we flipped to online delivery over the weekend, often via brand new platforms with lecturers being relatively unfazed at the reality of teaching multiple cohorts of students from their living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, as well as a wide variety of other pop-up classrooms.

Lecturers moved to new platforms, improvised with new technology, tested out and refined teaching approaches day by day and found a way to help our students achieve their goals, and realise their dreams.

Fast forward a year and nothing really has changed. The rules of the game are the same: provide students with the best possible learning experience whatever the circumstances you are facing. Speak to a hundred different lecturers and you will typically find a hundred different approaches and methods by which they are helping students to achieve their goals and

realise their dreams. This shows the creativity and innovation which is ingrained in lecturers across the sector. All staff across the sector are embracing this challenge and giving their all to the new world that we are currently living in.

I have had lots of conversations since starting my role at CDN, and within each one it is clear to see that the sector has an appetite to embrace what has been learnt from this challenging time and use this to shape what the future of further education can and should look like within Scottish colleges. However, what has been unanimously agreed is that it is crucial that a substantial volume of face-to-face delivery should be at the core of future delivery models and approaches. Student-lecturer connections are integral for many, many reasons.

Over these past months there have been some fantastic professional development opportunities. The volume of effective pop-up networks has been incredible and the realisation that online networks are an effective way for individuals and organisations to collaborate will not be lost. The volume of barriers to engagement within professional development that have been reduced due to the shift to online is significant. A word

of caution however, and this is through no-one's fault – we are at risk of information overload. It is often important to press the 'pause' button, to step back and reflect on what our priorities are, both as individuals and as a sector, and identify how best to address these.

All the above has shaped our future workstreams and we will be launching several opportunities this year with a clear focus on learning and teaching colleagues. We will be providing spaces for like-minded lecturers to collaborate, 'look over the fence' and 'maggie' ideas from each other with the sole focus on learning and teaching.

Opportunities for subject-specific collaboration will be on offer, as well as professional learning opportunities for individuals who are working with lecturers to improve teaching practice, whether that be as an advanced practitioner, mentor or other similar role.

As an organisation we recognise that lecturers are the heartbeat of the sector, and it is integral that opportunities are provided to share the fantastic work that is happening across the sector, as well as to provide a platform to support improvement.

## Three CDN Leads become recognised lecturers



Sandy MacLean



Suzanne Marshall



Sandra-Jane Grier

**We are delighted that three of CDN's Leads in Curriculum and Teaching – Sandra-Jane Grier, Sandy MacLean and Suzanne Marshall – have been designated as recognised lecturers by the University of Stirling, which is one of just two Scottish universities endorsed by the Scottish Government to offer the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE).**

In the vision of the Professional Standards

for Lecturers in Scotland, it is recognised that lecturers contribute to making Scotland a great place to live, learn and work by transforming lives through high-quality learning.

By placing Professional Standards at the heart of their practice, lecturers are supporting the enhancement of a culture of professional learning. It is recommended that as many lecturers as possible obtain a TQFE, or equivalent, for professional registration with the

General Teaching Council for Scotland.

The TQFE is unique in emphasising the importance of critical reflection, peer learning and peer assessment. Observation of professional practice is one of the methods used to assess lecturers, together with professional dialogue and review. CDN is happy to be able to contribute to the support of lecturers during academic year 2020-21 by undertaking teaching observations in semester two at Ayrshire College.

# LOVE SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

We were delighted to launch the [#LoveScotlandsColleges campaign](#), which took place from 30 November (St Andrew's Day) to 4 December 2020. The campaign reached 4.5 million people; with the hashtag being mentioned 1,613 times.

The week-long campaign was designed by CDN's Marketing and Communications Network and was supported right across the college sector. The collaborative campaign was launched to highlight the importance of Scotland's colleges – students, staff, college partners and the community, shared why they #LoveScotlandsColleges on social media.

We will be building on the success of 2018's national [#ChooseCollege campaign](#) and are excited to launch the next phase of Choose College this year. We will again be working with colleges across the country to

promote and raise awareness of the college sector at a national level. We also want to highlight the significant impact that the sector has, both locally and nationally,

and provide a vehicle to support college recruitment. Keep an eye on the [CDN website](#) for more information coming soon.



## COLLEGE AWARDS 2020 WINNERS

### Climate Emergency Action Award

**Winner:**  
City of Glasgow College

**Highly Commended:**  
Edinburgh College

**Commended:**  
Dumfries and Galloway College

### College Colleague of the Year Award

**Winner:**  
Craig Walker, Fife College

**Highly Commended:**  
Marion Darling, West Lothian College

**Commended:**  
Elaine Campbell, West Lothian College

### Digital Learning Award

**Winner:**  
City of Glasgow College – 'Creating a Digital Learning Hub'

**Highly Commended:**  
Dumfries and Galloway College – 'Student Friendly App'

**Commended:**  
City of Glasgow College – 'Offsite Ready Digital Platform'

### Employer Connections Award

**Winner:**  
New College Lanarkshire

**Highly Commended:**  
Ayrshire College

**Commended:**  
Fife College

The 21st College Awards took place online in December 2020 – a first for the ceremony. The awards were hosted by all-round entertainer Elaine C Smith, and showcased a sector that can truly innovate and succeed during the toughest of times. **Will 2021 be your year? Keep an eye on [cdn.ac.uk](#) for the 2021 call for entries.**

### Essential Skills Award

**Winner:**  
West College Scotland

**Highly Commended:**  
Borders College

**Commended:**  
Dundee and Angus College



# VIRTUAL CDN COLLEGE AWARDS 2020

## Health Promoting College Award

**Winner:**

West College Scotland

**Highly Commended:**

City of Glasgow College

**Commended:**

Forth Valley College

## Inclusive College Award

**Winner:**

Dundee and Angus College

**Highly Commended:**

South Lanarkshire College

**Commended:**

Glasgow Clyde College

## Innovation Award

**Winner:**

Ayrshire College

**Highly Commended:**

Fife College

**Commended:**

Borders College

## Marketing and Communications Award

**Winner:**

West Lothian College

**Highly Commended:**

West College Scotland

**Commended:**

Glasgow Clyde College



## Student of the Year Award

**Winner:**

Kirstie Ann Duncan, City of Glasgow College

**Highly Commended:**

Chloe Flynn, Dumfries and Galloway College

**Commended:**

Roseanna Campbell, Edinburgh College



## Hall of Fame winner

Richard Sagar, MBE, former Dumfries and Galloway College student

## Viewers' Choice Award 2020

For the first time ever, viewers had the chance to vote for their favourite winning submission. The viewers voted for...

Kirstie Ann Duncan, City of Glasgow College

## The Judges' Award 2020

Ayrshire College: #PassingPositivity:  
Mental Health United

Special thanks to College Awards 2020  
Gold sponsors: Jisc, SQA, and The  
Verdancy Group.

# DETERMINED TO SUCCEED

21-year-old Kirstie Ann Duncan was crowned Student of the Year at the 2020 Virtual College Awards. Last year she also won the F&C Investment Trust Prize for her video about how Generation Z can invest in their futures. We spoke to Kirstie about her time at college and her aspirations

## What did you study at City of Glasgow College?

'I chose to study Legal Services (HND) at City of Glasgow College because I saw it as a very prestigious college. I was impressed with the variety of study options at different levels. Also,

at the time a lot of my friends were applying to university, but I wasn't ready to commit to a four-year degree yet as I wasn't sure what subject I wanted to study.'

## Can you tell us about the group that you set up for care experienced students in the college?

'I wanted to do this to make students aware of all the resources that are available in and outside of the college – not everyone knows about them. I'm aware of a lot of different organisations due to my background in care, and I wanted to be a friendly face to tell students all about it.'

## How did your placement at law firm Brodies LLP come about?

'This came about thanks to the college's Legal Initiative Pathways programme, where lecturers put forward students for opportunities in a legal environment. It was the first one that was set up and I was put forward for an interview along with two other students. I was very well prepared for the interview, which went very well, and I got a call the next day saying that I got the placement! I was on placement for one week and learnt a great deal when I was there.'

## How does it feel to be a role model to other students?

'I never saw myself as a role model until it was pointed out to me! I love that I am someone people might look up to, and I want people to realise they can do anything. It's great to be someone that students can turn to for advice. I might not be able to answer everything, but it's great to be able to point people in the right direction.'

## How has the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown affected your life?

'The pandemic completely changed my life and affected it in so many ways. I am very fortunate that I wasn't alone in the first national lockdown that we had. Before the lockdown, I had various work experiences lined up and was planning to spend my summer travelling Asia. Thankfully, the solicitors I worked with agreed to take me on after the lockdown, which I am very grateful for. I sadly had to move back home for lockdown, which was a very big change in my life as I hadn't permanently lived at home since I was 18, and where I come from is very small compared to Glasgow! I'm grateful for the time I got to spend at home and luckily nobody in my village got the virus. I'm happy that a lot of things can be done virtually, and I can still receive my education from Strathclyde University, where I am now studying Scots Law.'

## Can you tell us about the voluntary work that you did in your local community during lockdown?

'In my area, there were a lot of vulnerable, elderly people, who were at high risk during the first lockdown. I volunteered by dropping off shopping and prescriptions for the elderly who didn't have any family members to do this for them.'

## What's next for you?

'Long term, my goal is to pass my degree. I'm really excited for the next few years of learning in my degree and I hope to pass with good grades. Besides this, I would love to travel and see more of the world outside of Europe, and potentially go on my Asia trip at some point this year. I want to learn about new cultures and experience new things. Obviously, this all depends on moving out of the pandemic, but I am hopeful!' 🌍



Kirstie won the Student of the Year and Viewers' Choice Award at the 2020 College Awards



# PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

## Matt Crilly, NUS Scotland President, makes the case for more student support

**When I was elected in March 2020 as President of NUS Scotland, I could never have imagined quite what was ahead of me. The priority I was elected on was fighting for free public transport for students – something that seems almost surreal now. My plans quickly had to change. My focus has, inevitably, shifted to our response to Covid-19.**

There is no doubt that students had a rough year in 2020. Like much of the population, students have faced uncertainty. It's fair to say it wasn't what they signed up for. The freshers' experience moved online. Students have had to adapt to learning from bedrooms, kitchens, halls – wherever they could find space. They graduated via video conference. The part-time jobs they rely on – particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors – have disappeared.

Throughout this, NUS Scotland has represented college students. We fought hard for £4.75 million in funding for those students who don't have the equipment or means to learn online. The Scottish Government has invested £1.3 million in mental



health support. We have secured much-needed clarity on student travel and the right to return home. Students living in halls are now able to serve their notice for Covid-19 related reasons. Working with our colleges, we were able to protect NHS placements for more than 1,200 college students, which were planned to be cancelled due to students not being covered by life assurance. And there's lots still to do...

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have been working with representatives across the country to make the case for emergency support for students. Students have told us that money is one of their biggest concerns in the year ahead. With the pandemic far from over, and the full economic consequences still to be realised, we remain deeply concerned that the worst is yet to come.

### Priority in 2021

That's why our priority in 2021 is making the case for more student support. We want to see students in colleges and universities getting the financial and digital support they need to

succeed. For too long, students have had to get by on cost-of-living support that doesn't keep up with the cost of learning. In Scotland, the reality is that students need to work alongside their studies just to make ends meet and for part-time students in college even basic student support is unavailable. Apprentices are expected to get by on poverty wages. While Scottish Government investment is welcome, many students still face digital poverty without access to laptops and devices to learn online. The pandemic has only exposed and heightened many of the challenges which already existed in our student support system. We believe students deserve better.

Action taken by the Scottish Government to date is welcome, but we need a longer-term plan. Without one, students face a cost-of-learning crisis. In the short term, we have been campaigning for the Scottish Government to double the amount of discretionary funding offered to institutions to support further and higher education students facing financial hardship. We have also urged the Scottish Government to provide an additional £5 million of digital funding in this year's budget to help equip students with the resources they need to complete their degrees. As we head into the Scottish Parliament elections in May this year, we will also be making the case for emergency changes to the cost-of-living support system in Scotland to meet the challenges presented by Covid-19 long term.

I'm so pleased and proud of the work of all our members across Scotland and look forward to another year of championing students. 🌈

# DEDICATION AND SUPPORT

**Craig Walker has been Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Manager since 2016. He won the College Colleague of the Year Award at the 2020 Virtual College Awards. We spoke to Craig about his achievements**

## Tell us about your role

'I think of it as being the civil service side of the Students' Association, working closely with the elected Presidents and Voluntary Officers – who are our equivalent to Ministers – to help them deliver the priorities they set out in their manifestos, while also working to deliver the FCSA's Strategic Plan and long-term goals. I line-manage all the FCSA staff and placements, as well as offering direction and support to the Officers, and make sure the FCSA is linked in closely with the work of Fife College, so that our strategic directions are a good fit.

'The people I get to work with and the fast pace of work within the Students' Association are what I enjoy the most. Our Presidents are only with us for two years, so achieving everything they want to do within that time frame can be challenging, but the rewards are definitely worth it!'

## How do you encourage Student Officers to achieve their full potential?

'Being a Student Officer can be a daunting prospect; you have a lot of power and freedom within the role but this can take some time to adjust to if you have not worked in a leadership role before. I try to reassure officers that it is natural to feel overwhelmed to begin with. I hope they know that they can ask me any questions they have, and they will receive the answers and direction that they need. As a former President myself, I try to remember how I felt and reflect on what would have helped me – I hope having someone that's actually been there is an advantage for them. I also encourage the Presidents to remember they only have a limited time in office and a capacity to deliver on projects. We make sure the Presidents have the support to deliver their manifesto aims and constitutional obligations first, and then work

together to find what other capacity they have in their time with us.'

## What advice do you have for college staff who want to improve the student experience at their college?

'Unfortunately, there is not one thing that will instantly improve the experience for everyone. However, the best place to start is to ask the students for their opinions... and not necessarily in a survey! It's important to create an open conversation where students feel comfortable sharing what they really enjoy and what could be better.'

## In what ways have you worked to improve student engagement?

'On campus I've worked to create an identifiable presence for the FCSA, so the students recognise us as being there for them, and not necessarily part of the college. In the first two years I focused a lot on making sure our representative models worked for the students and the college. This included introducing the FCSA Awards which act as a recognition and reward scheme for our reps and volunteers, including an end of year celebration event for the individuals that achieved the highest levels of awards. I then lead on the creation of the FCSA Student Recognition Staff Awards, which gives students the opportunity to nominate Fife College staff who they feel deserve extra recognition. I also introduced a new points-based

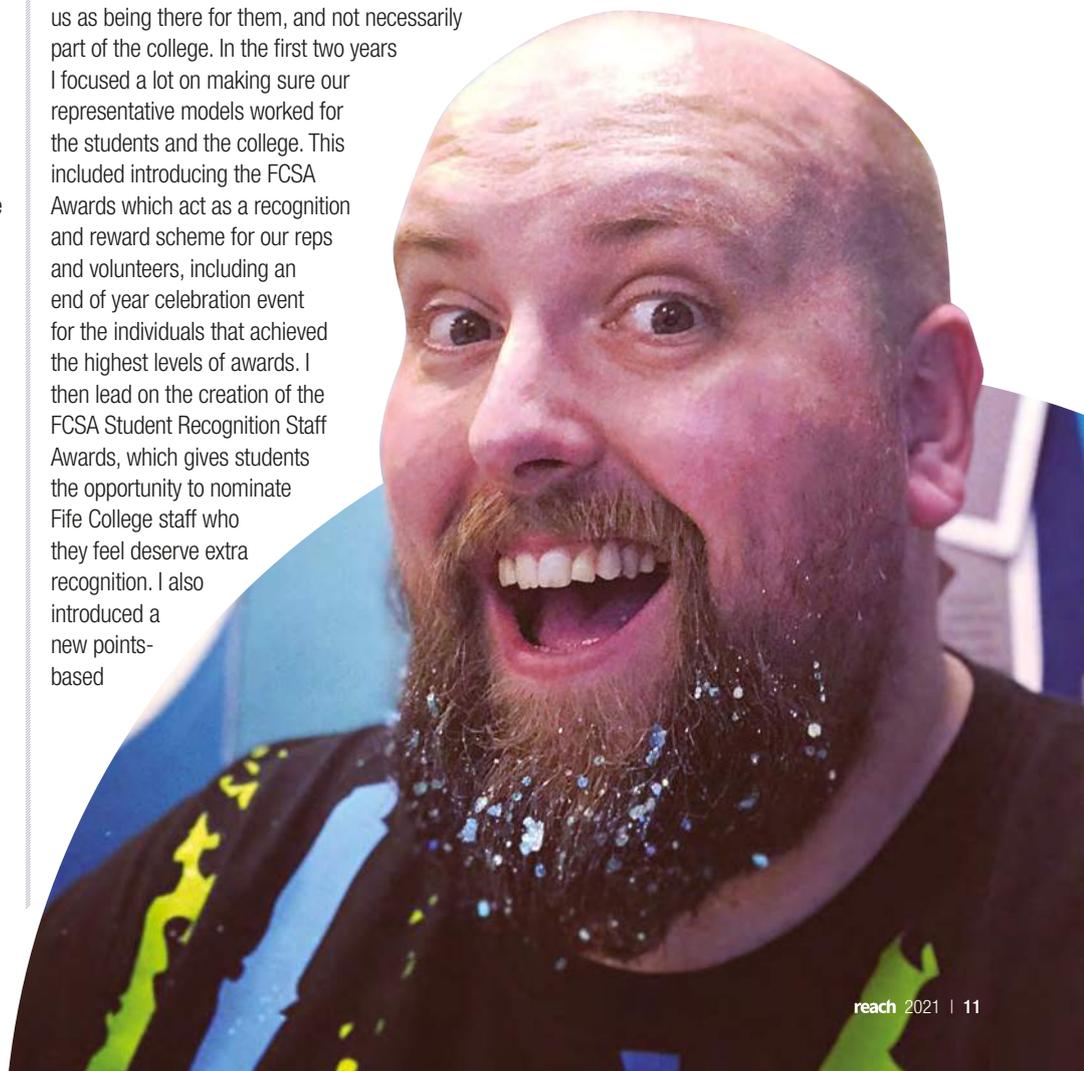
competition called Reppin' Player One, which helps to recognise Class Reps across the year, and the Fife College Faculty Student of the Year Awards where the academic staff chose their top students. Last year we hosted our first joint awards with Fife College, and I helped to create the Fife College Staff Member of the Year Award.

'To help engagement predominantly with our distance and evening learners we created the FCSA Digital Office on Microsoft Teams, which was originally used to communicate important updates to students. Since the pandemic, we developed more channels within the Digital Office. This now functions as our main meeting space for our Class Reps and our extra-curricular activities. It has really helped us to engage with students and hopefully provided them with a helpful space during the pandemic.'

## What would you like to achieve in the future?

'I would like to see the FCSA continue to develop and establish itself nationally as offering students the best possible level of representation, and a culture of extra-curricular activity on a level with university student unions.'

**It's important to create an open conversation where students feel comfortable sharing what they really enjoy and what could be better**



# PROTECTING OUR PLANET

City of Glasgow College won the Climate Emergency Action Award at CDN's 2020 College Awards. Fergal McCauley, Head of Facilities Management, tells us about the important work of the college's Environmental Sustainability Working Group. He explains how college staff and students are working together to promote sustainability and help tackle climate change

**A**t City of Glasgow College, we recognise that there is a climate emergency. The college is currently redrafting its Sustainability Strategy, not only to align with the Scottish Government target of net-zero emissions by 2045, but also because college staff and students want to focus on how we can help the environment and tackle climate change.

In April 2017, The Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG) was formed with membership from all faculties and sections across the college, including student representatives. The group primarily works to the aims and objectives of the college's Sustainability Strategy. It is a great forum to share ideas and to ensure we achieve our goal, which is to reduce our carbon footprint and protect our planet.

The coronavirus pandemic has taught us new ways of working but also, inevitably introduced new challenges. We believe that working in partnership with others is key to delivering change, and we have found huge benefits in doing so.

The ESGW works closely together to ensure all activities within the college, which impact on the environment, are covered. Not only does the group work to the aims and objectives of the Sustainability Strategy, but they also go beyond that to establish innovative ways to reduce and even improve our impact on the environment.

City of Glasgow College's Leadership Team is supportive, recognising and acknowledging a climate emergency. A review of our Sustainability Strategy has highlighted the need to ensure we

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We are thrilled that the college has recently been awarded a new six-year catering contract. The Facilities and Procurement teams worked closely with the Responsible Procurement Lead at APUC Ltd, and successfully identified and secured delivery of the following environmental objectives:

## CARBON FOOTPRINT



## WASTE REDUCTION





Student with a member of catering staff cutting herbs to be used in the college kitchen

> Continued from page 12

not only reach the government target of net-zero emissions by 2045, but also actively reduce our impact on the environment. We want to improve our surroundings and ensure our activities embrace social equality as we become a more sustainable business.

One of our environmental goals is to convert all gas appliances to electric by 2031, through lifecycle replacement. We also aim to swap out oil driven generators with battery cells to support UPS systems. Waste recycling is currently 85 per cent, with the remainder diverted from landfill.

Our future target will be to reduce the amount of waste that leaves our buildings. We have installed a general waste and mixed recycling compactor at our City Campus, which will reduce collections from 40 trucks to two trucks per month. In addition, our application to the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund to procure a food waste composter was successful, and it was installed in July 2020. This means that we have not only successfully removed food waste from landfill, but we have also provided a learning platform for students and staff in understanding a circular economy.

Before lockdown in March 2020, the college put in place a Cycle to Work scheme and we also



Cycling Officer Emily Farquhar

plan to introduce an annual travel pass scheme for public transport. We have a Cycling Campus Officer and earlier this year the college achieved Cycling Friendly Status with distinction for both campuses. Funding secured from Cycling Scotland enabled construction of secure cycle storage at our Riverside campus, and investment in an e-bike loan scheme for staff.

City of Glasgow College is working towards embedding environmental and social sustainability within college departments and curriculum areas.

The college works closely with the Responsible Procurement Lead at APUC Ltd to ensure partnership working. This

keeps us abreast of events and changes happening within the college sector, as well as in other sectors. It also provides us with a presence at working groups such as the Climate Change Forum and the Climate Commission for UK HEFE Leader Group. By working together, we can share best practice within HEFE and other sectors. The college procurement team has recently worked

with APUC to develop their new Sustainable Procurement Objectives.

Working in partnership with Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College via Glasgow College Regional Board, we established funding for a shared Environmental Sustainability Manager on a two-year fixed term contract. This post will promote sustainability, develop and promote projects to reduce the carbon footprint in colleges, support and advise on the development of teaching materials and qualifications. The successful candidate will lead the Glasgow college region's sustainable agenda. 🌱



The Tidy Planet Rocket will compost over 35,000kg of food waste annually

# A PEDAGOGY-FIRST APPROACH TO BLENDED LEARNING

Jackie Galbraith, Principal and Chief Executive of West Lothian College, was first involved in online teaching 25 years ago. Here she explains how college learning and teaching is poised to embrace digital delivery as never before – but pedagogy must lead the technology



**L**ockdown catapulted most colleges from exclusively face-to-face teaching to delivering all courses online. No blend, just full-strength online delivery! Our lecturers, work-based assessors and trainers threw themselves into remote delivery and worked hard to help students complete their qualifications online.

In a matter of days lecturers moved all learning resources onto Moodle and figured out which apps and digital tools they could master quickly to keep students engaged online and at a distance. Work-based assessors switched from face-to-face delivery with employees in their

workplaces to full virtual assessment customised for different industry sectors. Trainers delivering learning to children's hearing volunteers across Scotland created fully online courses, as well as blended courses that used Zoom to simulate live children's panels.

What we learned from this experience has shaped what we are doing to support students this year. For example, our hair and beauty lecturers used Padcaster Studio to record demonstrations during lockdown that kept students engaged, and these are now being used in other curriculum areas for live streaming, as well as recording and helping

lecturers to reimagine how, for example, their students can compete in live skills competitions against other colleges across the UK. Our lecturers recently live-streamed practical skills tasks performed by professional cookery students to enable them to compete in the British Student Culinary Competition 2020 via Zoom. The 41 awards achieved by our students were a testimony not only to their skills, but to the creativity of their lecturers in designing such an excellent blended learning experience.

## The blended approach

As colleges planned for return from lockdown,

we were advised by government to adopt blended learning as the default, with the suggested blend being more online than on-site. Jisc defines blended learning as providing 'a combination of face-to-face learning and dynamic digital activities and content that facilitate any time/any place learning'. Done well, the blended approach combines the strengths of traditional face-to-face and digital teaching methods to give students a rich and engaging learning experience.

### One size doesn't fit all

Like coffee, the strength of the blend often depends on personal taste and other ingredients in the mix. The stronger the online aspect of the blend, the more students need to have independent study and research skills, digital literacy, motivation and resilience. One size definitely doesn't fit all in a blended approach, and some courses have a stronger blend of face-to-face time on campus. This has focused on the delivery of practical activities that can't be delivered online, for motivating and building relationships with students at risk of disengaging, and for supporting vulnerable students.

**Like coffee, the strength of the blend often depends on personal taste and other ingredients in the mix**

### Learning from experience

Things we introduced prior to lockdown helped. For example, our staff development week in August 2019 focused on digital skills, and a new innovation fund we launched last year funded the introduction of a range of digital technologies for learning, like the Padcaster Studio mentioned earlier.

During the first lockdown, we ordered new laptops for all lecturers, upgraded our virtual learning environment and essential student systems, and provided access to training on digital skills for lecturers and other staff. We standardised Microsoft Teams and Office 365 as our online platforms, mirroring what is used by all West Lothian schools. As the top destination for school leavers in West Lothian, it is important that young people joining us use digital learning platforms familiar to them. Our excellent links with West Lothian Council and its digital learning team resulted in a dedicated member of staff working with the college to connect our lecturers with resources available to teachers through Glow, Scotland's digital learning network for schools.

Leadership in digital pedagogy is being provided by a cross-college group supported by a new post that has been filled by an experienced lecturer with expertise in digital pedagogy. The group has



Jackie Galbraith

met every course team to understand their vision for blended learning, advise how to adapt their pedagogy to achieve that, and offer bespoke support to help them. They are surveying all staff to better understand their training and development needs in relation to digital skills, literacies and pedagogy.

Twice-weekly virtual drop-in sessions facilitated by our digital lead, and a staff learning academy on Moodle that hosts training materials on our digital platforms, are improving the confidence of lecturers. Demonstrating leadership of this pedagogy-first, digitally-confident approach, all faculty directors and managers are completing the same training so that they are equipped to support lecturers.

An online community of practice to share tips and techniques is gaining momentum with those involved in the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. Many are excited by the possibilities for adapting their practice to get the most out of the blended approach. Others are more reticent and we hope that the support put in place will build their confidence.

A very exciting next step is that the group will be reaching out to student representatives to find out what students need for digital upskilling. The staff academy on Moodle will be replicated for students, giving them access to many of the same training materials available to lecturers.

### Refining the blend

The vital ingredient for successful blended learning is pedagogy, a clear understanding of the place

and purpose of digital tools in teaching. Digital skills, digital literacies and digital confidence are essential for applying these tools effectively in learning and teaching. As lecturers move towards registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges set out the values, knowledge and understanding, and practice expected of those in the profession. Digital learning, technologies and literacies are woven into these standards.

**The vital ingredient for successful blended learning is pedagogy, a clear understanding of the place and purpose of digital tools in teaching**

The pandemic accelerated the use of digital learning, teaching and assessment in all education sectors, from a fight or flight response when we were forced into lockdown, to a more planned approach this academic year where the blend is through necessity more online than face-to-face.

Beyond these emergency years, we need to refine the blend for our students so that it is right for them. Adopting a pedagogy-first approach will ensure that learning and teaching are in the driving seat and not the technology.



# UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF ONLINE DELIVERY

Katy MacDonald, Course Leader – Supported Learning, at West Highland College UHI, explains that online learning has resulted in much better student engagement and tells us how her students are thriving in an online learning environment

**I was dreading online to begin with, I thought we would just be set work to do. But I am so glad that we did Teams, it's just so easy and I get to see my friends. I really like how much time we spend face to face online. It means we can see each other and help each other**

**In 2019-20 our Supported Learning Programme (SLP) students, who have significant learning support needs, physically attended classes in their local West Highland College UHI centre. Today, most of our students are attending online classrooms and successfully engaging with technology.**

Being at a greater risk from Covid-19 than the general population, our main concern at the beginning of the first lockdown was for the health and wellbeing of our students. College isn't just an educational experience for them, it's their link to the local community as well.

We contacted students early during lockdown. This was challenging due to complex communication needs. With increasing popularity of video technologies, we wondered about trying this with our students. However, the VLE didn't work out for our students.

So, we set up a private Facebook group to engage our students while we investigated other options. Facebook was a resounding success. We put up topics for discussion, suggested activities for outdoor learning and gave regular accessible Covid guidance updates. Engagement was good and we began to feel that there might be some

hope for online delivery later in the year.

In June 2020 we seized the opportunity to be part of a Microsoft Teams pilot. We felt this would be a positive development and started devising a curriculum that would work for online delivery to our students, being mindful of their additional support needs. We completed MS Teams training before setting up one-to-one physically distanced inductions. We supported students with Teams installation on personal/college devices and to learn how to log in.

Student engagement has exceeded our expectations. For many of our students online classes were the first time that they had seen their friends since lockdown. I feel that this was and remains a huge motivator for many.

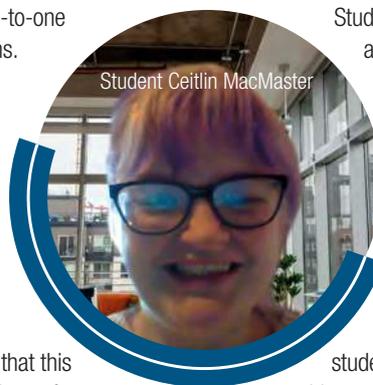
Early classes focused on learning to work online. We established ground rules the same way that we would in any class. Novel rules included agreeing a dress code, cameras on (unless there were connectivity issues which happened far less than we had feared) as it is nicer to see each other, mute when not talking. Our class timetable

and curriculum has now been completely moulded to suit this new way of learning. Learning packs are regularly sent home and practical classes are designed to work around things we all have easy access to (materials or experiences).

In the beginning, it was easy to focus on the barriers that online learning may create, especially for those with learning support needs. I honestly did not stop to consider the positive impact that it could have. For many, online classrooms have cut out long journeys to and from college, and have provided something to focus on during a difficult time. For several students online classrooms remove the anxiety students feel about attending a busy college centre.

Students are able to access classes and make new friendships with students who are in different locations – for example, some live three hours apart. Online classrooms have ensured that we can all stay connected, and in that way, we are not worried about another lockdown.

I now regularly log in to find my students already in their classroom catching up on *I'm a Celebrity!* My students have amazed me - they are coping with living through a pandemic, many are thriving in the online environment and I have been reminded, again, never to underestimate them. 🌟



Student Ceitlin MacMaster

Watch Ceitlin talk about her online learning experience at <https://fb.watch/291qibISN/>

# FLIPPING GREAT LEARNING

Alex Alves, Computing Lecturer at Dundee and Angus College, explains how the flipped learning approach has helped his students with online learning

**I** have to be honest, up until recently I didn't actually realise I was using the flipped learning model for some of my classes! After it was pointed out to me, I did a bit of research and realised I had been using this model for around two years. Flipped learning is where students are introduced to learning material before class with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by teachers.

For me it was a solution to a problem. I teach Server Admin to my first-year networkers and since this unit is heavily theory orientated, this did not leave a lot of time in the two-hour slot for the students to do any practical work. The students had started to refer to the class as 'Death by PowerPoint' which is never good! My solution was to give the students ownership of their learning, by setting them work to revise prior to class, this left more time for practical

work. But I had to figure out how to ensure the students were looking at the presentations and taking the information in.

Kahoot was my solution to this problem. I developed Kahoot quizzes with questions based on the presentations. I also keep a league table, awarding points to the students that come in the top three, and at the end of the course the top three receive a prize – this has really helped to encourage the students.

The benefits to this are multiple:

- The students need to schedule time for themselves outwith college, homework if you like, which helps them prepare for the work environment and if they go on to university, where they will be expected to do this.
- When delivering the Kahoot quiz you can see from the student answers whether they have been reading and understanding the work set for them.
- If a lot of students get a question wrong, you

can pause and discuss that specific section, and suggest further reading.

- The information in the presentations is reinforced in the Kahoot quiz, and then again in the practical labs, which helps the students take in and retain this information.
- Students can get quite competitive which results in friendly banter and this encourages them to talk together and to talk with me.
- I now have students asking when they will get their next Kahoot quiz, which means students are asking for a formative assessment.
- You can include some interesting general knowledge questions which again result in classroom discussions.
- For any students that do not understand, there is more time to spend with them, while the other students continue with their practical exercise.

This approach certainly helped when we shifted to remote learning. The students have experience of self-study outwith college hours, meaning they are already used to managing their own time, which is essential when learning remotely as it is much harder to ensure the students are keeping up to date with their work. With remote learning I also try to stay away from the old model where I presented to the students. I found that when in the college environment this worked for some units, but remotely this can lead to students disengaging, or browsing social media while you are teaching!

Since using the flipped learning model for Server Admin, my first-time pass rate has gone up and the students are engaging much more. One of the benefits to remote learning is that students who were not so keen to speak up in class are much more likely to talk via chat features in Microsoft Teams.

I will continue to use this model when I get back into the college classroom, as it works well whether you are in a classroom environment or teaching remotely. 🌟

Computing Lecturer Alex Alves





Life drawings by Sheree White,  
HND Art & Design

# LIFE CHANGING LESSONS

**Chris MacKenzie, Lecturer in Arts and Fashion at Ayrshire College, tells us how he learnt to make tutorial videos so he could teach life drawing online**

**I**n recent months changes to the way our art courses are delivered have been dramatic to say the least. Pre-Covid, I could be sceptical about the role of technology in teaching drawing and painting.

But blended learning has necessitated technology in fostering these skills. Technical demonstrations for a semi-circular gathering of students, are for the time being not possible. My Curriculum Manager Johnnie O'Byrne 'electrified' the drawing studio, so that a handi-cam could record and project the demo for students at their easels, spaced safely apart. It might not seem like anything more than common sense, but we began to develop the recordings, editing them into short tutorial videos.



Chris MacKenzie

The college Digital Integration Team had, in summer 2019, made me part of a development programme intended to share ways of producing content for the college's online platforms, to support the blended learning model. Learning Technologist Kevan Scade taught me a great deal about Microsoft Stream, which is a great video platform for colleges. It mirrors the compressed, accessible content and experience that students themselves are drawn to on YouTube.

I did a little homework looking at the elements that make this kind of YouTube content attractive, and concluded that the up-close camera angles, short run times and use of music were aspects that could enhance the learning process. To be completely honest, with hindsight, it's possible some of my live

I'm so delighted with how the students have responded to the videos

demos perhaps over-ran slightly! It's also easy to become absorbed in the moment, forgetting occasional key points, whereas a video voiceover could be the chance to convey and reiterate what's important.

I knew roughly the kind of content I wanted to produce and where to publish it, but the making process was less certain. I used the summer 2020 programme to learn and practise basic video editing. 'Basic' is the key word here because I've learned that the content should be brief, concise and clear, not

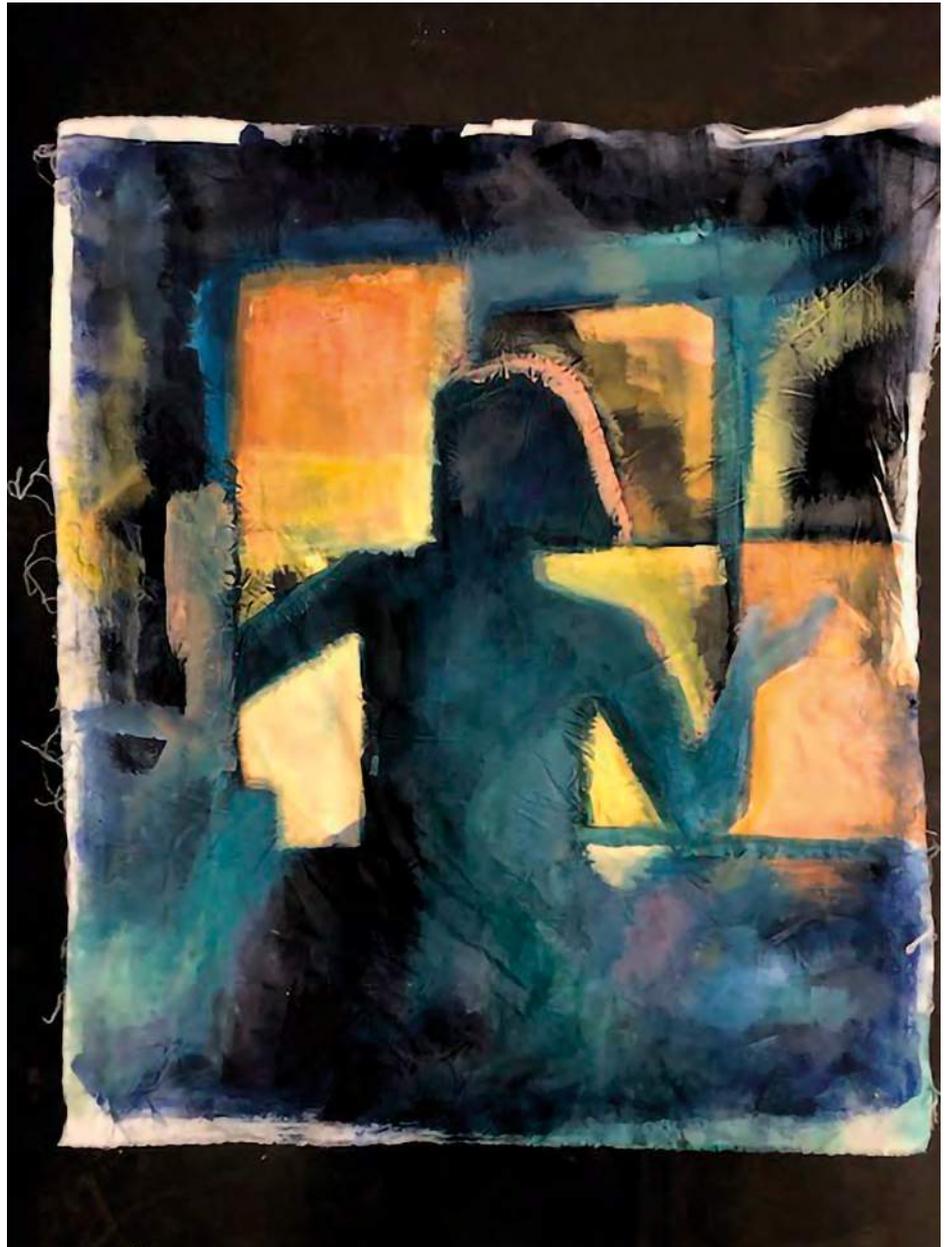


necessarily intricate. I wanted to avoid styles that were too distracting or ornate.

I questioned whether video editing made effective use of my prep time. It can be painstaking work, even in quick and informal clips, but on balance the content can be of benefit to multiple classes and levels, which justifies the time from my point of view.

In 2020, I was involved in a great deal of life drawing. I love to teach figure drawing because it's a genuine challenge for learners, and for me. We learn together and from each other to some extent, and sometimes students are astounded by how far they come.

My teaching in life drawing relies on demonstrations, so I knew that I could collate footage on a weekly basis and produce 'replay' videos for those at home. Life drawing from home simply isn't ideal. Students thrive on access to the live model. However, I wanted to create a home brief that would allow



We found a place for technology as a support to students' technical development, without compromising the hand-skill values of drawing and painting

students to practise some of the principles of figure drawing – basic anatomy, proportions and most importantly gesture.

I hoped that by practising these elements remotely, with the videos for guidance and 'alternative' references on Clickview, that the students would have a more proactive start to life drawing and that their confidence might

develop more quickly. I think that in this respect we found a place for technology as a support to students' technical development, without compromising the hand-skill values of drawing and painting.

I'm so delighted with how the students have responded to the videos. Many use them as intended – a 'replay' of what happened in the class but played in their own time, in their own space. For some who have self-isolated, the videos have helped them avoid missing classes. For those working from home, the videos have helped guide the work being done in sketchbooks and folio sheets.

No one would celebrate the pandemic, but there are elements of the adapted and flexible learning and teaching approaches that I hope to retain in the future. 🌈

Watch one of Chris's tutorial videos at [bit.ly/Lightanddarkvideo](https://bit.ly/Lightanddarkvideo)

# FIND YOUR FUTURE

Dundee and Angus College's programme, 'Find Your Future', helps young people reach positive destinations. Steven Taylor, Vice Principal of People and Performance at Dundee and Angus College, tells us more about this project, a College Awards 2020 winner

Participants have developed a growth mindset, learning plans and goals, and self-resilience



**D**undee and Angus is the regional college covering some of the most deprived areas in western Europe. Many of the college's current and potential students face multiple barriers to success, including poverty, violence, teenage pregnancy, substance use and mental health issues. These barriers are particularly pronounced for children and young people, and school attainment levels within the Dundee and Angus region are significantly below Scottish averages.

Against this backdrop, Dundee and Angus College has created the partnership programme 'Find Your Future', which has a clear focus on giving positive opportunities and routeways out of poverty for young people. The aim is simple: to break the cycle of poverty, and to give new futures to young people.

Focused on young people who are at significant risk of severe poverty, the programme has been designed to engage with young people within their own communities, gaining trust,

nurturing, supporting and educating them, and helping to relaunch them into the world of employment, training and work.

Since March 2019, 'Find Your Future' has outstripped 'mainstream' provision in terms of retention and delivering positive outcomes for youngsters that have engaged. Most of those involved are well on the road to fulfilling careers.

For many young people going to college is a huge step, but for some youngsters, the thought of education doesn't even register. Despite thousands of students we have helped over the years, we are aware of an underclass who persistently slip through the educational and social safety nets, who are lost in society, without the confidence or the knowledge of how to seek help. Our challenge

was to find these young people, and to give them the confidence and ability to pursue a better life and to break the cycle of poverty.

'Find Your Future' is a three-year programme supported through the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Fund, facilitated by Criminal Justice Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council. It was designed to build confidence, gain qualifications, develop employability, and enhance life chances. It delivers a series of collaborative partner-based, courses, which nurture and train young people towards careers in areas of known growth in our regional economy (such as care, hospitality and the digital industries), followed by a carefully constructed 12-month programme of mentoring and support.

**We are aware of an underclass who persistently slip through the educational and social safety nets, who are lost in society, without the confidence or the knowledge of how to seek help...**



The programme is designed to build the confidence of participants

To deliver this programme we felt that creating new, strong, effective partnerships in our communities was the only way we could genuinely support the success and sustainability of the young people. To achieve this, the college used a double pronged approach – community engagement and supported course provision.

Our Learner Engagement Team set up a Community Engagement service, networking with agencies across the public and third sector, including schools, charities, Community Learning

and Development teams in Dundee and Angus, and the Angus Community Planning Partnership. With the help of their expertise we were able to build a picture of the young people we were trying to attract and how best to reach them.

Our Employability Team strengthened their links with recruitment partners, including Skills Development Scotland, Job Centre Plus and private training providers. This helped us tap into the job market in our area and assess where the best employment opportunities were likely to be.

We then developed three initial 12-14 week programmes, 30 hours per week, which would encourage, engage, motivate and support our youngsters.

We were faced with some challenges along the way. The second cohort highlighted some very significant issues within our communities, including drug dealing, knife crime and serious gang violence. Due to the complexity of the group, the course was changed mid-way to ensure maximum benefit.

This resulted in an increased focus in areas such as behavioural change. Despite these challenges, the course was successful, with all participants achieving certification.

Overall, the success rates for 'Find Your Future' cohorts are very impressive, with 75 per cent of participants achieving a sustained positive destination. Everyone who completed the course developed their ability to self-promote for interviews and future destinations, they developed a growth mindset, set learning plans and goals, and self-resilience.

Perhaps most importantly for provision of this type, over 90 per cent of participants stated that engagement within 'Find Your Future' had changed their lives. The programme is changing lives in Dundee and Angus every single day, bringing young people into education who would otherwise be lost. 🌟





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# TACKLING RACISM

Dr Nighet Riaz, Advance HE Programme Adviser (Scotland), tells us about the vital conversations that are happening to address racism in Scotland's education sector

In October 2019, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report *Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged* set out a number of recommendations for the HE sector to address racism. The report led to much soul-searching and many conversations across the whole tertiary sector. This resulted in the Scottish Funding Council inviting Advance HE to lead a new project, to provide a focal point for Scottish universities' and colleges' responses to the

report: 'Tackling racism on campus: Raising awareness and creating the conditions for confident conversations'.

I joined Advance HE in late January 2020, tasked with supporting and facilitating the discussions of the project's steering group, and to develop tangible outputs to support the scope of the project, in order to create spaces for confident conversations around race, racism and whiteness. The steering group members were drawn from the university and college

sector, professionals, EDI (equality and diversity) consultants, academics and students, all with expertise in anti-racist pedagogy, and lived experiences of racism.

I asked our college members in the group about their experiences and I am pleased to share some excerpts from their blogs here:

Jacqueline Fitzpatrick, ESOL Lecturer at Glasgow Kelvin College, shared how for the majority of her life she had been a silent victim and observer of racism. She highlighted the



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# ON CAMPUS

personal impact it has had on her. She also reflected on the ineffectiveness of legislation and the absence of political will to tackle racist behaviours or structures:

*'Change would mean relinquishing some of those privileges and superiority. For some the idea of master and slave is appealing. They hold onto the intoxicating idea that one's race in society is above another, to validate their existence. The superiority of being and the idea of greatness can only have its place in the belief that someone is less than ourselves. Colonialism, slavery and other social/conspiracy theories that are solely based on dehumanisation or racial groups continue to diffuse this idea.'*

Jacqueline joined the steering group, and this thread was repeated in many conversations with fellow members:

*'When I got wind of the steering group and the aims and objectives of the group, which in a snapshot were: stop racial harassment through education and open dialogue (subjects close to my heart), I just wanted to be a part of it. I was bubbling to be amongst kin, folk who know what it's like to be racialised, sharing our experiences and working*



Jacqueline Fitzpatrick,  
ESOL Lecturer

*towards making change and impact... When we gathered for the first time, we all wanted this group to be different from other groups with similar agendas that had gone before us. For me, I wanted us to make a difference, not just another record or tick box exercise, recycling information. I want this project to pioneer a basis for topics of race to be taught and included as part of the curriculum, not just in social science classes. We need to contend for positive messages about*

*BAME groups. We need to stop propaganda – historically propaganda was used as leverage to subjugate, enslave and plunder countries of the commonwealth, today developing countries. These countries form a significant number of racialised groups or origins of most racialised groups in the western world and the USA. History has to be exhumed to heal the present.'*

Monica Medina, Diversity Coordinator, Forth Valley College, shared how joining the steering group immediately captured her imagination. She had previously switched from lecturing to specific EDI work because of her experience with anti-racist activism. Having lived in Scotland for several years, she had finally found a community where people would talk openly about racism and social exclusion: *'The assertion of "creating confident conversations" particularly attracted me as this is the precise predicament. If we cannot discuss racism, deny its existence; we fail... This project has the potential to extend discussions into actions, to look at what we have differently, to listen to people's stories and challenge ideologies that work for few. It is the monumental challenge of undoing centuries of inequality but like the civil rights movement in the 60's, the zeitgeist has turned in our favour. When I meet with my colleagues from the steering group, we speak the same language even though we come from various backgrounds, and in this, I find optimism.'*

Soon after the first meeting of the steering group in February 2020, lockdown meant we had to work and meet online. So, we restructured and got to work on how we would address some of the EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission) recommendations, working out what this would look like and how it could be achieved. Khadija Mohammed, the Chair, alongside Monica Medina, Adrian Lui and Sharan Virdee, were invaluable in developing a strategy framework.

### Black Lives Matter movement

In June 2020, following the unlawful killing of George Floyd in May, which resulted in the third iteration of the Black Lives Matter movement across the globe, there was a sharp focus on condemning and addressing racism; and the education sector found itself in the public spotlight for its reaction. Many institutions were sympathetic but did not want to issue statements which could be seen as a performative, i.e. a statement for a statement's sake. In Scotland, we carried on engaging with our tertiary education sector bodies, demonstrating how racism could be addressed. In our meetings with sector leaders, what became clear was:

1. The very real fear of 'getting it wrong'
  2. Wanting to make a positive difference but needing support
  3. An appetite to learn and apply knowledge
- Linking all three points started showing the



## If we cannot discuss racism, deny its existence; we fail

steering group some of the gaps which needed to be addressed:

- Racial literacy
- The historical and current context of migration and race relations in the UK as the foundations and 'missing pieces' of the narrative which has been missing in our educational curricula
- The need for this information not to be in a silo, but shared prominently across institutions, i.e. tackling racism is everyone's responsibility.

This led to the webinar series which aimed to create spaces for more confident conversations on race, racism and whiteness. The webinars were led by Khadija Mohammed and steering group members, and they have since been picked up as resources to use within academic programmes across the UK.

Throughout the project, we were supported by our colleagues at College Development Network, Colleges Scotland, and Universities Scotland, to engage with the sector. We shared our ideas about what needed to be done to address racism in our campuses. They helped tune and fine-tune our ideas and plans, and became part of the co-production, leading to the realisation of EHRC Recommendation 9, 'sector buy-in'. This cumulated in the endorsement and declaration by the Scottish Government Minister for Further and Higher Education and Science, the Scottish Funding Council, and the whole Tertiary Education sector:

"Racism exists on our campuses and in our society. Call it what it is and reject it in all its forms. We stand united against racism."  
'Declaration Against Racism' (14 August, 2020).

The declaration is underpinned by the statement of intent (in final development), highlighting eight key areas within institutions, which college and university principals have made a commitment to address racism by endorsing the declaration.

We were particularly heartened by the response of the Chair of the College Principals' Group, Principal and CEO of Ayrshire College, Carol Turnbull: *'Ayrshire College rejects and*

*condemns all forms of racism and violence and together we stand in solidarity to achieve equality across our communities and beyond. There is no place for racism or violence in any community including our own college community.*

*'As Principal and CEO of Ayrshire College, I endorse this declaration and commit to ensuring that we continue to review everything that we do, that we listen and learn, and that we work closely with our local partners to change practices and influence mindsets and attitudes.'*

The interest and support for the project has led to three new short-term projects: developing a toolkit to support an anti-racist curriculum; a pilot to provide training to leaders within institutions to use the project resources effectively and to evaluate impact; and an expert working group exploring how the sector can actively address the underrepresentation of the BAME workforce, chaired by Sue Clyne, HR Director at Edinburgh College.

We have travelled a fair distance since October 2019, but there is more work to be done. 🌍

**Find out more about the project at:**  
[www.advance-he.ac.uk/tackling-racism-campus-raising-awareness-and-creating-conditions-confident-conversations](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/tackling-racism-campus-raising-awareness-and-creating-conditions-confident-conversations)

**Read the Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged report at:**  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged)



Diversity Coordinator  
Monica Medina

# RAISING THE PROFILE OF COLLEGE LECTURER PROFESSIONALISM

The launch of the pilot lecturer registration programme in November last year was a milestone for the college sector. In August 2021, another landmark will be reached when lecturers across Scotland start to register with GTC Scotland. Dr Pauline Stephen explains how the college sector is working in partnership to support an enhanced culture of professional learning and help ensure the best possible outcomes for students

**W**hen I first joined GTC Scotland, I was fortunate to attend the SQA Star Awards. The awards recognise the contributions made by individuals, organisations, and others towards helping students achieve the qualifications they need to move on to employment, training, or continued education.

I presented the Partnership of the Year Award to Dumfries and Galloway College and The Usual Place for their collaboration on a café in Dumfries which provides opportunities for people with additional support needs. For me, it was a fitting award to present, as my first priority in my new role was to further enhance the partnerships GTC Scotland has with colleges, local authorities, universities and other partners.

A partnership approach is also key to raising the status of college lecturer professionalism in Scotland, and central to the pilot lecturer registration project that launched in November 2020. This is a joint effort between GTC Scotland, EIS-FELA, Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council. We are a diverse

group, with different views and ideas, but we are united in our commitment to ensure that all lecturers in Scotland's colleges benefit from registration with GTC Scotland.

The pilot registration project is a significant milestone in our collective endeavour. Lecturers from Dundee and Angus College, Forth Valley College and Glasgow Kelvin College who hold a Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE), or a recognised primary or secondary teaching qualification with service in further education, have started to register with GTC Scotland. The three colleges are also helping us test our systems and share insights which will allow us to establish new routes to registration. All of this will help ensure we are ready for the roll out of lecturer registration across the college sector this year.

## High-quality learning

With almost 8,000 lecturers in colleges in Scotland it's no small undertaking. It is however an essential undertaking. Scotland's colleges play a vital role in our society by delivering high-quality learning experiences for students,

which helps them to achieve the best possible outcomes and career destinations. A culture of lecturer professionalism is key to improving the quality of learning and teaching in the Scottish education system, for every learner.

As a registrant of GTC Scotland, lecturers are required to be guided by the Professional Standards for College Lecturers, and to actively engage in career-long professional learning. There is already a diverse range of rich professional learning taking place across Scotland's colleges, but this is often not known about beyond the college it is happening in. To help advance professional learning in the college sector, GTC Scotland, together with College Development Network (CDN), Education Scotland and EIS-FELA Learning Representatives, are working to raise awareness and increase engagement in the wide variety of professional learning taking place. This is just one of the ways in which we are developing supportive professional services for lecturers that enhance their professionalism. We are also working with our college partners to develop a new professional code for the college sector, which we aim to have in place by August. Neither project would be possible without the collaboration of the college sector.

Ken Muir, Chief Executive and Registrar at GTC Scotland, has been a champion for lecturers and as I step into his role, I hope to do the same. Through registration with GTC Scotland we will raise the profile of lecturer professionalism, and by supporting a culture of professional learning will help ensure the best possible outcomes for our students.

**Dr Pauline Stephen will shortly take up her new post as GTC Scotland Chief Executive and Registrar, succeeding Ken Muir. Find out more about college lecturer registration at [www.gtcs.org.uk/college-lecturers/college.aspx](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/college-lecturers/college.aspx)**



Dr Pauline Stephen

# THE ROLE OF COLLEGES IN POST- COVID RECOVERY

**S**cotland's economy will face a significant contraction resulting from Covid-19 but, according to Colleges Scotland, as in previous times of recession, the college sector will play 'a critical role in driving economic revival, in part by assisting young people and those who have lost their jobs in upskilling, retraining and providing them with the skills sought by employers and by supporting businesses of all sizes to get back on their feet and increase productivity'.

The Independent Commission on the College of the Future states that Covid-19 consequences, leaving the EU, climate change and the fourth industrial revolution mean that everyone will need access to part-time, adult and vocational education as the economy and jobs change over the next few years, requiring new skills.

While the UK Government is attempting to support young people in Scotland into work with the £2 billion Kickstart placements scheme, employers are currently much less likely to be recruiting or able to support apprenticeships.

Youth unemployment levels are expected to continue to rise, leading to more young people needing to learn employability skills in order to give them a greater chance of moving into the workplace post Covid-19.

Richard Lochhead, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, said: 'Learning at college or university has a positive effect on students' personal development, their wellbeing and life chances. And it is crucial to our ability to develop trained professionals to support key services such as health and social care.'



THANK YOU NHS

'It is also important for our economic growth, particularly as we recover from the negative impacts of both Covid and Brexit, since it provides a pipeline of talent we need to continue to grow our country.'

Scotland's colleges welcomed Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Skills and Culture Fiona Hyslop's launch of the Young Person Guarantee, which aims to see every 16-24-year old in Scotland in paid employment, enrolled in education, on an apprenticeship or training programme, or engaged on a formal volunteering or supported activity programme within the next two years.

Many colleges, including New College Lanarkshire and Edinburgh College, have promoted their online courses for 2021 with a reskilling and upskilling marketing focus.

Fife College recognised the need for fast-track, relevant training, holding an online recruitment event for its health and social care courses, aiming to attract students inspired by frontline workers during the pandemic.

According to Kay Fraser, Director of Faculty for Care, Social Sciences and Education: 'As the situation continues to develop it is clear that dedicated, committed social care professionals will be in high demand in the days, months and years to come.'

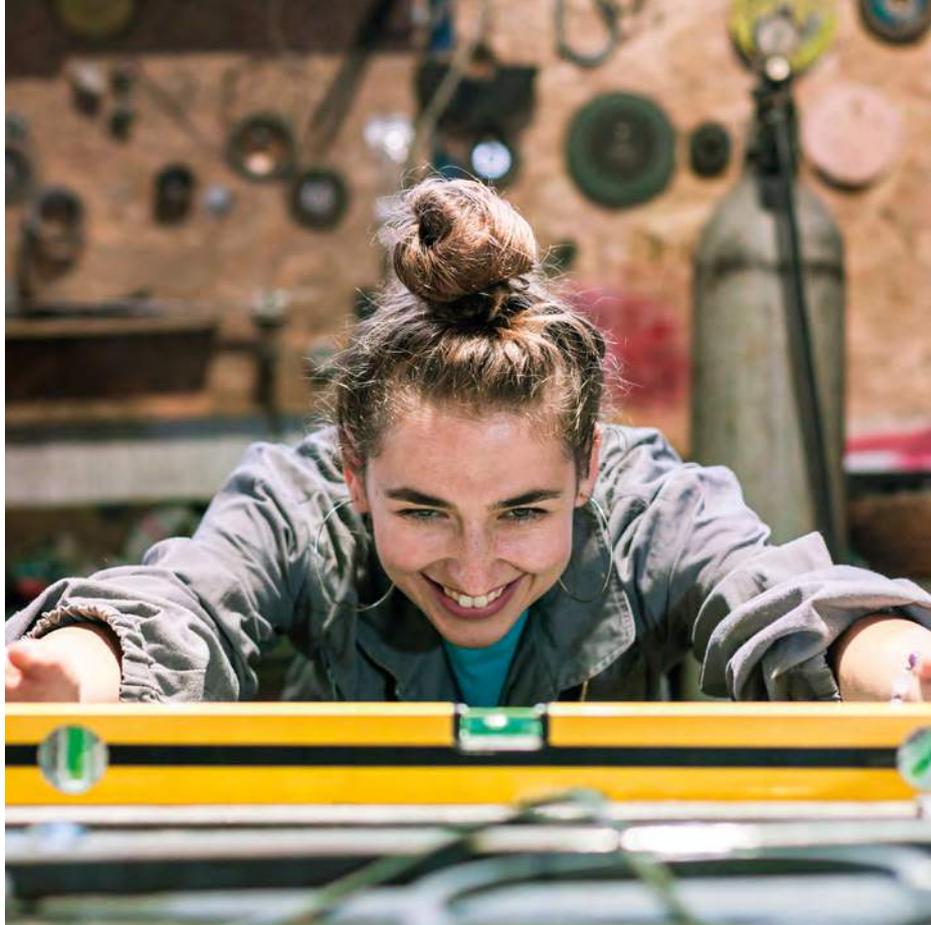
The college also promoted Certificates in computing and the creative industries as a means of re-training or exploring a career change.

A new [BIGGAR Economics report](#) shows that Argyll College UHI contributes £26 million to the local economy every year and supports 280 jobs in the region. The authors highlight that this value goes far beyond its financial contribution, explaining: 'The college's digitally connected centres allow for provision across geographically scattered rural communities, in a way that would be impossible for more traditional institutions. There are several areas of value here for the labour market.'

'The college helps address skills shortages that would be faced by the health and care sector without local provision. These sectors struggle to attract labour from elsewhere in Scotland, and so the college provides an opportunity for Argyll to 'grow its own' health and social care workers, allowing its residents to move into the sector during their life course. The sustainability of the labour market in this sector is of fundamental importance to the future of Argyll. Without nurses and care workers, the viability of rural hospitals in Dunoon, Lochgilphead and Campbeltown might be questionable.'

Additionally, 'The opportunity to study at

Continues overleaf >



## THE COLLEGE OF THE FUTURE REPORT

The Independent Commission on the College of the Future calls for colleges to be placed front and centre of radical, long-term education and skills reforms and investment, to address current and future skills gaps and transform life chances for every adult.

Its [College of the Future UK-wide report](#) set out how colleges can be supported across the four nations of the UK to deliver the lifelong learning and business support needed for people, employers and communities to survive and thrive in the future.

The recommendations are:

- **Provide grants and loans that allow college students to live well while studying** to bring down barriers many adults face to further study and training, particularly those on low incomes, in precarious employment, and for those who require retraining or upskilling opportunities (due to Covid-19 and labour market changes). It will also offer equity for students across further and higher education by reflecting the specific additional support that particular groups will need – including childcare costs, travel costs, additional funding to support disabled students and scrapping limits when claiming benefits.
- **Establish a new service through college employer hubs to tackle skills gaps**, giving businesses a one-stop shop for upskilling current employees, finding the skilled workers they need, as well as innovation support, for example prototyping.
- **Overhaul, rebalance and integrate the**

**whole post-16 education and skills system in each nation** with a 10-year strategy for how colleges will deliver what each nation's economy and society needs and redressing funding inequity where it exists.

Audrey Cumberland, Principal and Chief Executive of Edinburgh College, said: 'Predictions of the potential for a global pandemic have circulated for many years, reinforced by the emerging conditions that could contribute to making this a reality; climate change, massive urbanisation, a global economy and growth in international air travel. Our report reflects a deep dive into how colleges can best be empowered to respond to these conditions.'

'Scotland has undergone really important reforms over the past decade, putting us in a real position of strength that the Commission has learnt from.'

'The ongoing Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) review represents a serious opportunity to develop a more coherent, agile and integrated tertiary education system that will support colleges to deliver even more for our people, employers and communities. If 'education is the passport to the future' then my hope is that this report stimulates discussion, debate and thinking across our sector, policy-makers and funders to start preparing for our future today.'

The Commission on the College of the Future is also producing nation-specific reports. It published [The Scottish College of the Future report](#) in December 2020.

# COLLABORATION IS KEY

By Simon Hewitt, Principal of Dundee and Angus College

It is safe to say that we have all been rocked hard by the impacts of Covid-19. The pandemic has affected every aspect of both our personal and working lives and has caused significant disruption to life all around the world.

Further education is no different, it has been thrust into a new world of remote and blended learning and has had to adapt, innovate and reinvent itself to ensure it continues to provide the high-quality experience and wider support that our learners expect.

As the scale of the challenge started to emerge in April 2020, we spotted an opportunity to establish the Vice Principal Curriculum network – designed to bring together all of those Vice Principals across the sector who had core responsibility for the curriculum within their college.

Originally only set up to deal with the challenges emerging from Covid-19, we now meet fortnightly and, over the past few months, have worked together to influence and shape key priorities and guidance from Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and SQA.

We have also worked together to provide collective responses to Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council to ensure we are supporting our learners in the best possible way under the current circumstances.

We have reached out to the equivalent group within Universities Scotland and have had early discussions with regards to bringing the groups together to discuss and support each other on key themes around learning and teaching pedagogy.

However, the most exciting part is that we are now a network, a force. We are discussing key topics regularly; we are sharing ideas and best practice and we are influencing as a group in ways that wasn't seen previously. We are moving from reactive to proactive and together we are identifying opportunities to enhance the student experience.

## > Continued from previous page

postgraduate level for a teaching career with UHI's PDGE qualifications provides similar support in the labour market for education, allowing Argyll residents to re-skill into the teaching profession.'

Fife College, Edinburgh College, Forth Valley College and West Lothian College have collaborated to recommend eight products for individuals and employers hit by the economic downturn. They include apprenticeships, the creation of Skills Boost Academies in key areas such as digital and industry, and the development of Accelerator Programmes, which would see colleges across Scotland able to introduce accelerated versions of existing qualifications such as engineering, computing and care.

Principal of Fife College Dr Hugh Hall said: 'Each of the recommendations in the report have been formulated after thorough analysis of the jobs market, and could make a huge difference to those looking to upskill and reskill, and to the businesses who will be looking for skilled workers in the coming months.'

Dr Ken Thomson, Principal of Forth Valley College, added: 'This is a chance to make learning work for the people of the Central Belt and the East of Scotland and help the country on the road to economic, educational and social recovery.'

Jon Buglass, Vice Principal, Edinburgh College said: 'We have used labour market intelligence data from Skills Development Scotland to understand who is most at risk of unemployment, where the demands for skills and jobs are coming from and in which occupations – which is informing our offer to people and businesses across the region. The four colleges collaboration compliments the work Edinburgh College is doing as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and is part of an integrated plan to ensure we are providing the courses needed to help the recovery from the economic downturn.

'We are concentrating our efforts to focus on

areas such as Business and Financial Services and Health and Social Care. Digital skills are vital at a basic or advanced level. In many areas of employment, people are using data and analytics in normal areas of their work; to increase our offer we have many new courses which incorporate data science and business analytics as a new core skill.'

Following the development of a Fast Track into Financial and Professional Services PDA (SCQF Level 7), co-delivered with industry finance and banking partners, Edinburgh College aims to launch new Fast Track courses in Health and Social Care working through the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills programme, later in 2021, aimed at graduates looking to reskill. The Datalab is also working with the regional colleges on a new Fast Track PDA in Data Science.

Mr Buglass said: 'The pandemic has shown the importance of the health and care workforce with the region's workforce in these occupations projected to need to grow by nine per cent over the next decade.'

In March, the college will launch new short Skills Boost courses at SCQF levels 4/5, to help people train quickly, with a focus on Social Services and Care, as well as basic employability and data skills. New January 18-week HN Accelerator and SCQF Level 6 Programmes will comprise Business and Computing courses, amongst others.

Mr Buglass said: 'We will have everything in place – the courses and the industry partnerships to help people thrive and progress in their chosen areas – it all comes down to what people want for their futures after this pandemic and Edinburgh College is here to support them.'

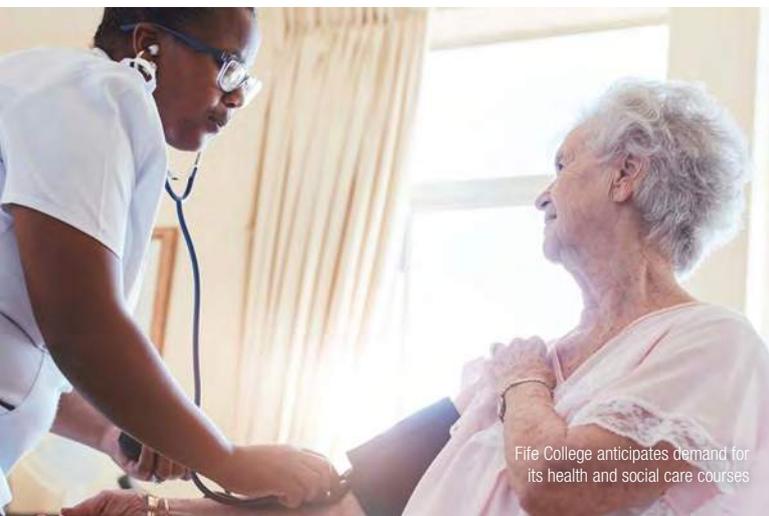
As Principal and Chief Executive of City of Glasgow College as well as President of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Paul Little is also well-placed to understand the relevance of colleges' engagement with business. He said: 'I know that Scotland's colleges will continue to demonstrate



Dr Hugh Hall



Watch Dr Ken Thomson at:  
<https://vimeo.com/475478803>



Fife College anticipates demand for its health and social care courses

and mentoring. Good practitioners may be promoted into leadership roles but don't have the management skills required and that is more important now than ever to improve staff morale, to make an organisation more resilient and better able to handle challenges. There is much more emphasis on wellbeing, resilience and mental health. With most people working from

Government's responses to Covid for young people, such as Kickstart and a focus on apprenticeships, but in terms of upskilling and reskilling employers' existing workforces, colleges are best-placed to support with the recovery through practical and operational training.'

Skyscanner turned to the college after identifying a need for supervisory and first-line management to develop coaching and mentoring skills. Nicole Smith, Senior Talent Executive at Skyscanner Glasgow, said: 'Our learners' confidence and knowledge in coaching and mentoring has greatly increased. We are keen to work with City of Glasgow College again to deliver this unique, accredited coaching programme at scale.'

Former Skyscanner COO [Mark Logan's recent review](#) into stimulating and accelerating the maturity of Scotland's technology ecosystem identified the need for interventions and improvements in education in computing sciences and related disciplines from school level upwards. He highlighted CodeClan, an organisation that provides a 16-week intensive training programme in software engineering, for its success in student completion rates and employer engagement.

CodeClan's approach could be replicated to some extent by colleges, Logan stated.

Meanwhile, Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland have called for more flexible articulation pathways for learners so that it is more attractive to a larger group of students and to meet learner demand in the post-pandemic economy. Professor Nigel Seaton, Joint Convener of the National Articulation Forum and Principal of Abertay University said: 'I can only see a greater role for articulation in Scotland's post-pandemic future.'

the agile, collaborative, and inclusive approach central to our sector – identified in the recent [Cumberford-Little Report](#) – and especially pivotal in this time of crisis.'

Since April, City of Glasgow College has delivered over 400 bespoke short courses remotely to over 3,500 employees, through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF).

Douglas Thomson, Flexible Workforce Development Manager at City of Glasgow College, said: 'Training budgets are often the first thing to be hit during hard times, but the fund has allowed employers to continue to address skills gaps to allow them to become more productive and efficient, as well as helping with their plans for post-Covid recovery.'

'We've adapted to fit new demands as some training needs changed because of the pandemic, the national lockdown and ongoing social distancing measures. Clients appreciate our flexibility.'

For Radisson Hotels UK Ltd, the college's ability to adapt was key. Sarah Penkett, Learning and Development Manager, said: 'Feedback from our employees has been amazingly positive, with many saying it has improved their confidence.'

The college supported the business with a selection of half and full day training courses for heads of departments and supervisors. Topics included areas such as emotional intelligence, positive psychology, and building and leading teams.

While the college has previously delivered health and safety, food hygiene, marketing and IT courses, the pandemic has shifted its clients' requirements towards interpersonal skills, management and leadership skills and mental health awareness. Douglas said: 'Clients have wanted courses in managing difficult conversations, coaching, customer service

to maintain productivity and have these recently identified skills gaps to address.'

Douglas said that there have been some upsides to moving course delivery online. 'Some clients have a large geographical spread of staff, which usually makes it a challenge to get all employees together in one place. Lecturers would also have to travel to an employer, but now they can do two half day sessions in a day.'

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government increased the annual £10 million fund to £13 million for academic year 2020-21, to encourage colleges to work more closely with employers and help employees upskill and reskill. More employers across Scotland can now apply for funding as the FWDF is now available to SMEs.

Edinburgh College's Jon Buglass said: 'While many large organisations applied to the FWDF for leadership, health and safety and digital skills training, now SMEs may be wanting to benefit from these skills – managing employees and changing the culture of their workforce.'

City of Glasgow's Douglas said: 'We're seeing businesses return regularly for follow-up workshops and future training requirements. And we are adding to an accessible portfolio of programmes specifically tailored for industry and business needs.'

'We welcome the Scottish and UK



# MEET THE UK'S FE TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2020

In 2020, Helena Good was crowned Teacher of the Year at the Tes FE Awards, becoming the first-ever winner from a Scottish college. We spoke to Helena about her career in teaching, her motivations, and her thoughts on the future of education



Helena Good

### How long have you been teaching?

'I've been teaching graphic design for 27 years. My first job in teaching was at Falkirk College for a couple of years, then I moved to Telford College, which then became Edinburgh College. I have now worked at Edinburgh College for about 25 years.'

### Can you tell me about your teaching experience?

'After graduating, my first experience of graphic design was working as a graphic designer in a large agency in Edinburgh for five years. Looking back, this helped inform my approach to teaching and to realise the need to blend in the transition between education and the workplace into one continuous process. The foundation upon which this process is built is the early and integrated use of mentors, drawn from industry and who are motivated to "Give Back" to the next generation as a way of investing in their own futures and recognising the value of their own education in their success. "Giving Back" is a call to action. What can you do to give back more to the world than you take out? In turn, we also ask all our students to give back during their time at college, mentoring school pupils and the students in the year below. In our 2020-21 mentoring programme, 34 mentors are working with our HNC/ HND students, bringing the real world into the classroom. It's inspiring to see so many previous students come back and want to support current students as mentors. I think much of what teaching is about is helping students by providing the necessary tools to navigate confidently in a world that can feel increasingly complex and volatile. Technology now allows us to reach out in a way that we never thought was possible a few years ago. We are now in a global classroom, meaning that students in Scotland can connect with students in Toronto. The mentoring programme has been the biggest influence on my teaching experience and has kept me inspired for 25 years.'

### What is your proudest achievement as a teacher?

'There have been so many proud moments – mostly times when I have been particularly proud of my students. For example, I worked with a student who couldn't present, and then after some time they won Star Marketing Student of The Year. Winning the Tes Teacher of the Year award was a real honour for me and my family. Personally, it's a way of recognising all of the people that support us in our jobs and in our personal lives – those that listen to our stories, as well as all our colleagues. Tes gave us a moment that we will never forget. More than ever as a teaching community we need to come together to recognise and celebrate our achievements in this challenging environment.'

I know that how we meet these challenges today will shape the future of education tomorrow and we can, if we want, define that road ahead.'

### What does it mean to you to be the first winner of Teacher of the Year from a Scottish college at the Tes FE Awards?

'I came to Scotland 28 years ago. I love Scotland and I'm very proud to be able to work here, alongside so many amazing people from all over the world. I feel very honoured and grateful to all the staff at Edinburgh College who have been a huge support and source of inspiration to me as a teacher.'

### How did you celebrate your win?

'The awards should have been in London in March last year, but the ceremony was obviously cancelled. It was held online, which meant I could have my whole family online with me. It meant I could scream, and I really did raise the roof, (and a prosecco or two!) in my own home. It was a wonderful moment which I will never forget.'

### What do your students teach you?

'They teach me something new every day, from how to work Microsoft Teams, to being curious and creative. When we are open to co-creating with our students and seeing ourselves as much of a learner as they are, that's when it's exciting! 'Why?', 'What if?' and 'How might we?' – those questions embody my experience of working with students. In asking those questions, they have taught me an awful lot.'

### Did it take you long to get to grips with online teaching during the pandemic?

'I think I'm still getting to grips with it every day, which I find exciting because we're still doing different things. I think it's exciting to have that autonomy. Wonderful examples of innovation are coming out of this method of teaching and learning. I think this will be the moment we reimagine education. I don't think we should be talking about going back in any way but only moving forward.'

### How important do you think college-employer engagement is?

'What colleges do very well is vocational learning and teaching. When we embrace that and shout out about the connections we have with employers – that ability to train for careers – that makes us unique. Having an open-door policy is really important; it's genuinely important to let employers into your classroom, and now it's never been easier for them to do that. Currently, businesses and colleges are asking themselves difficult questions, and we should come together as a community. The workforce is changing, and we all need to be

able to pivot, and we need to see ourselves as collaborators.'

### What inspires you?

'I'm interested in looking at the ways we can reimagine education and am keen for people to have a conversation about that. I'm part of a team working on the Creative Bravery Festival ([www.creativebraveryfestival.com](http://www.creativebraveryfestival.com)) – an online learning festival based on the music festival format, which is an amazing example of what happens when you are open to collaborating, when ideas that were presented were not imagined, but actually came to something! It is about connecting with people and believing that anything is possible, as long as you are able to take that next step. We created a learning eco-system, and we want to nurture and support creative bravery in education.'

### Can you tell me about Daydream Believers?

'I'm a Team Leader of the Daydream Believers initiative, which is an open-source online platform that places creative thinking at the heart of education. We set out to frame learning in both relevant and realistic contexts. We launched the [www.daydreambelievers.co.uk](http://www.daydreambelievers.co.uk) website in August 2019 and have worked with incredible partners including Lego, Skyscanner and Rockstar - they have all created amazing content and lessons. We encourage creative bravery in our teaching and learning and are currently creating ways to implement meta-skills into our curriculum. When the Tes judges described Daydream Believers as 'the most important educational initiative in Scotland at the moment' that has to be up there as one of my proudest moments. In January 2021, we launched our Creative Thinking qualification at level 5 and 6. This is a new award credit-rated by Edinburgh Napier University and will be moderated and assessed by Edinburgh College. We believe this is an exciting example of what happens when schools, colleges and universities work together with a common vision. If you are interested in finding out more, please get in touch or follow us on Twitter @be\_daydream'

### What are your top three teaching tips?

1. Be comfortable with the questions: Why? What if? and Why might we?
2. Be kind to yourself
3. Find your tribe.'

Helena Good is Visual Communication and Graphic Design Lecturer at Edinburgh College. In January 2021, Helena started a 12-month secondment at Skills Development Scotland – an opportunity to support the delivery and assessment of meta-skills across the apprenticeship family. Find Helena on Twitter @helenamgood 🌈

# WORKING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

**Karen Watt, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council,  
looks at the three-phase review of tertiary education**

**W**e've been through a lot together over these last few difficult months as we collectively kept vital education and training opportunities open through a global pandemic.

College staff have been dedicated and adaptable, devising online learning, supporting students in hardship, hand-delivering laptops, making campuses safe, helping students achieve their qualifications, and putting together programmes to support local businesses. And Boards have both supported and constructively challenged college responses at this critical time. Through it all, partnership working between the Scottish Funding Council and colleges has been more important than ever, as we have co-designed guidance and programmes, worked with colleges to flex budgets and requirements, and enabled additional funds to reach hard-pressed institutions.

When the Scottish Funding Council was asked by Scottish Government Minister, Richard Lochhead, to lead a review about how best to secure coherent provision for learners by post-16 education bodies, and to consider the future of research in these changing times, we were simultaneously delighted and rather daunted. How could we stimulate a debate about the future while dealing with the Covid-19 crisis, and would people have the headspace to engage? How could we draw on the foundational work of the *Cumberford-Little Report*

and distil the many and varied views about the future? And how could we make this review consultative, open and inclusive, rooted in the partnership approach we take to our work with the tertiary sector?

Well, we've been bowled over by the response – it's been phenomenal and inspiring. We've distilled more than 100 responses and our early findings in our first report from this three-phase



review (that will conclude in early summer 2021). You will find the report and lots of background material on [our website](#).

## **Appetite for conversation**

We found a huge appetite for conversation about the future. There is overwhelming support for the role colleges play in transforming lives, being anchor institutions within communities and stimulating economic and social recovery. Our first phase report reflects back what we have heard and proposes ten themes for further development. It also sets out some options for how our SFC framework could develop to support change.

One of the key findings so far is that we have a unique opportunity in Scotland to create a much more integrated, connected tertiary education and skills system. Respondents to our review highlighted practical ways we could build on the strengths of regional colleges, accelerate collaboration between colleges and universities, reduce duplication in terms of repeat levels of study and incentivise more efficient, equitable learner journeys.

Our report also highlights the fact that excellent online and blended learning delivery for students is no longer nice-to-have, but is now an essential core strategy for every education institution, while also recognising the importance of campus life and on-site practical skills acquisition. The challenge is how to develop more efficient and



high quality curriculums online, and support tutors and lecturing staff to harness this digital revolution for enhanced learning and teaching.

#### Options to consider

A further theme in our report is the need to build long-term relationships with employers and industry, particularly to align the work of colleges and universities with the future needs

of the labour market. Our report covers the need for micro-credentials, and work-experienced learners, and support for safeguarding apprenticeship programmes, while considering how they might develop for the future.

We propose options for the Scottish Government to consider and possible changes to SFC's framework – moving away from activity targets, reducing the complexity of funding

models, elements of performance-based funding to support student outcomes, reviewing our approach to Outcomes Agreements, and designing a Transformation Investment Fund to support colleges and universities to adjust for the future.

I'd encourage you to read our report and the accompanying material on our website, to use it to generate further debate about the future in your college and networks, to share your views and reflections with us ([reviewsecretariat@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:reviewsecretariat@sfc.ac.uk)), and to look out for opportunities to get involved in the next couple of phases of our review. We are committed to securing the best outcomes for students, employers and the institutions that deliver such life-changing opportunities for learners across Scotland. We will get the best outcomes if we collaborate and shape the future together. 🌟

**We have a unique opportunity in Scotland to create a much more integrated, connected tertiary education and skills system. We are committed to the best outcomes for students, employers and the institutions that deliver life-changing opportunities for learners**

# TRANSFORMING THE LIFE CHANCES OF YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKERS

Glasgow Clyde College has been working hard to improve the education of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people through its unique English language course. ESOL teachers Lyn Ma and Mercedes Richardson tell us more

**M**any children and young people who arrive in Scotland alone are not only separated from their families, but they are unable to speak English. Learning the language is their greatest educational need. Many of these separated young people are aged between 16 and 20 years old, and the majority come to Glasgow. When they arrive, they either have no formal education, or they have had their school years disrupted by conflict in their home countries. This has left them with lower literacy levels and significant gaps in their knowledge of key subjects.

Glasgow Clyde College works closely with the Scottish Guardianship Service to support the educational and wellbeing needs of vulnerable young people, ensuring inclusion through a comprehensive and responsive pedagogical approach as they seek to integrate into Scottish life.

A unique course was developed by the college in response to these young people's specific needs. Using a holistic and peer learning approach, the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) 16+ Programme

offers pastoral, as well as educational care, and supports the young people's personal and social development, while teaching English as a second language.

This specialist education programme for separated young people aged 16-19 offers three classes: Beginners level; Elementary level (National 2); and Pre-Intermediate level (National 3) teaching.

The programme can take up to three years to complete. It incorporates creative pedagogical methods and therapeutic elements, including study skills, language and personal and social development, peer support mechanisms and positive role modelling, all of which are commensurate with students' age and circumstances. Upon completion of the course, students achieve the SQA's National qualification in ESOL, which allows them to progress to further study and/or employment. Perhaps most of all, this inclusive approach has enabled these students to integrate and participate in Scottish life, in the country that has become their new home.

#### Reducing isolation

The programme provides students with routine



and a sense of belonging, and these factors help to reduce isolation. Using varied and diverse teaching practices to make sure all learners are catered for, we support our staff to understand our learners better by sharing our experiences, our resources, keeping up to date with what is going on in the students' lives, getting specialist training in mental health or trauma informed approaches. The college team works hard to understand what our students want, evaluating their needs, what situations they are in and what kind of barriers to learning they face. Lecturers monitor student wellbeing, attendance and progress, and liaise with external agencies and partners, to support students to access emotional support and legal guidance. They also



encourage students to engage in activities and groups outside the college.

Equality, diversity and inclusiveness are inherent in the very nature of our ESOL classes, as dictated by our client groups. Our young asylum seeker and refugee students have very different experiences, attitudes, beliefs and problems from each other, and indeed from their teachers. We have to be adaptable and flexible in how we teach and reach each individual, as the students we teach are from all over the world – Vietnam, China, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Our students face incredible challenges in their everyday lives which can hinder their ability to learn, and it is vital that we

are sensitive and understanding of those issues.

The college worked with the Scottish Refugee Council to create a [Routes to Learning handbook](#) and website, which was designed for all professions (teachers, support workers, youth workers, community workers, guardians and social workers), who work with and educate young, unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. The handbook has been designed to support separated young people and sets out the approach, curriculum and sample resources of the programme. It is dedicated 'to all the students we have worked with over the years – who have overcome great barriers and adversity to learn English and adapt to a new life'.

The Glasgow Clyde College team try to cater specifically to the students we work with. By doing this, we hope to help students adapt to life in Glasgow by learning the language and understanding the new environment they are living in, whilst not losing their own sense of culture, experience, nationality, or identity. The ESOL course provides them with an opportunity to explore their own skills and interests, and through a varied curriculum we hope to provide all the students with a sense of self belief and confidence. 🌍

**Hear from Glasgow Clyde College ESOL students, as well as the course teacher, at:**  
[https://youtu.be/29Q\\_Rzs61vQ](https://youtu.be/29Q_Rzs61vQ)

West College Scotland has developed a personalised employability skills programme in partnership with Renfrewshire Council. Here we learn about the impact of the programme, a winning entry in the College Awards 2020

# BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

**Y**our Employability Skills Programme (YES) is a personalised learning programme for individuals with multiple barriers into employment and education. It has been developed by West College Scotland and delivered in partnership with Renfrewshire Council as part of their No One Left Behind initiative.

The eight-week course aims to enhance and develop the essential skills of individuals with historical and current criminal convictions, those who have experienced the criminal justice system or those affected by homelessness. These individuals are likely to experience multiple barriers to employment and education.

This programme creates structure within the participants' lives, giving them the opportunity to meet new people and build relationships. The college supports the students looking for work and gives them the opportunity to gain new SQA qualifications. The course also offers guidance on disclosing convictions to employers. The participants become part-time students at West College Scotland, allowing them access to college resources, support and facilities.

A range of workshops have been created and delivered, which aim to increase confidence, motivation, transferable skills, enhance work ethic and leadership practice, all designed to create progression to education, training or employment.

Renfrewshire Council approached the college in the summer of 2019 with plans to replicate the success of their 'Keys to Learn Programme'. This programme had achieved high retention and

engagement rates, as well as positive destination outputs. Once the programme had come to the end of its funding in early 2019, Renfrewshire Council hoped to build on the model.

Launched in September 2019, the first cohort attracted high levels of interest, and 10 participants were accepted onto the eight-week course. Participants were encouraged to research and practice leadership traits to understand and appreciate the extent and impact of their previous chosen behaviours. They were taught how to utilise personal management tools, with the intention of reducing recognised employment barriers and increasing positive rehabilitation and life opportunities.

## Academic framework

The academic framework focuses on a range of key factors which have the potential to impact on a person's participation and progression. To ensure consistency and a standardised approach to service delivery, these factors have been split into the following four categories, created from a combination of national learning strategies:

- Social and behavioural development
- Relationships and environment
- Health and wellbeing
- Education and employment.

The programme underpins modern human developmental themes which make a commitment to the Scottish Government personal improvement and wellbeing initiatives, and focus on key priorities as set out by the Developing the Young Workforce in Scotland initiative. It also reflects requirements

set by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, as well as supporting the regional ambitions set by 'Invest in Renfrewshire'.

West College Scotland recognises that programme success requires a strategic effort to ensure all participants are provided with a fully engaging educational experience. The established model involved a rich blend of learning, and ultimately offers participants the opportunity to make informed decisions to help prepare for learning, life and work. Additional online support for literacy and numeracy can be accessed by the students through the college's virtual learning platform. Participants were enrolled as students and were located on campus just like any full-time course. This allowed them to experience college life as a whole, and to benefit from the structure of a further education institution.

The students had access to the college's online Skills Reflection tool. They were encouraged to write and reflect on personal attributes and skills achieved to date, thereby understanding the broader impact of those skills. Embedded throughout the programme, the students had the opportunity to reflect personally what they have taken from the experience – making their experience more meaningful and engaging them in active learning.

A crucial key learning objective was at the end of each eight-week programme, when the participants presented the outcomes of their personal journey to a selective audience. They

**Continues overleaf >**



BASELINE

- VISION
- HAZARD
- DECISION MAKER
- TEAMWORK
- REASONING
- WORKING TOGETHER
- EXAMPLE
- DETERMINO
- FOLLOWING
- SCEPTICAL
- NEGATIVE
- BELIEF



**“For the first time in ages I see a better path for my life, and I’m confident I’ll get there”**

*Course attendee*



> **Continued from previous page**

discussed their own personal attributes and skills, identifying where the next part of their personal journey begins. This was a powerful part of the course and sometimes very emotional, as it demonstrated how the participants recognised their own progress and the personal skills they had acquired during the programme.

**Benefits**

Results and feedback at the end of the current programmes have clearly demonstrated effective and positive participation through a mix of delivery methods, keeping the client group fully engaged. By their own admission, many had previously had negative experiences in compulsory education and/or post school education. Relevant interaction enabled the study of a range of contextualised subject matter via audio and visual technical platforms and resulted in participants:

- Developing a range of essential skills that could be applied to their own lives
- Communicating in a variety of contexts, including inter-cultural relationships
- Communicating confidently with people at different levels
- Building productive networks and enabling one to call on the right people for help with complex or unexpected issues
- Reflecting on personal skills and attributes
- Consistently demonstrating co-operation to prevent and manage conflict
- Anticipating and managing how other people see things and how they perform
- Engaging in employment and education marketplace opportunities with renewed passion and confidence
- Developing knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and behaviours.

This integrated multi-agency service provision has improved life opportunities for those with historical or current convictions; including people subject to diversionary initiatives, serving short sentences, Community Payback Orders or licenses, and those disadvantaged due to previous offending behaviour.

- More than 55% of participants gained employment after the eight-week course
- 10% entered further education
- 20% are still in contact and being supported by

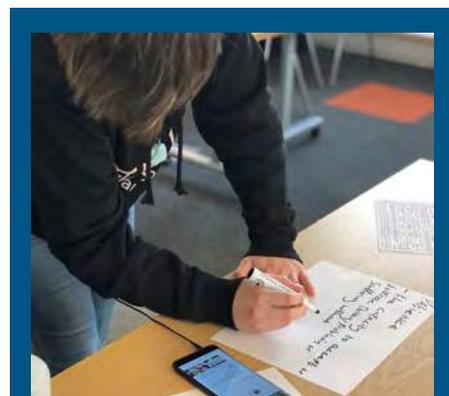
Renfrewshire Council employability services.

The course enjoyed two successful cohorts in 2020, all of which were fully enrolled with 10 students on each. The retention rate has been outstanding, with almost every student completing the course. The programme is set to develop and grow with a three-year plan in place and scope to diversify.

**Future developments**

The programme continues to evolve, based on detailed staff/student evaluation. Success of the programme has allowed the council to secure funding for a further two years. The graduates from last year’s programme will return as mentors to share their success stories and support the next intake.

Based on the success and positive feedback of the 2019-20 courses, additional funding has been secured to expand the YES programme. The college will be delivering similar curriculum content with the key focus on developing personal attributes and essential skills to care experienced individuals. This expansion of the provision will result in around four eight-week courses being delivered, allowing a greater number of students with multiple barriers the chance to develop and enhance their skills for learning, life and work. 🌟



**WHAT THE STUDENTS SAID ABOUT THE PROGRAMME**

‘For the first time in ages I see a better path for my life, and I’m confident I’ll get there.’

**‘It felt like a ‘real’ learning environment, and I was treated like everyone else.’**

‘It was a great opportunity for self-reflection on my life and how I see the future.’

**‘It made me realise colleges ... were not just full of kids.’**





# THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Gill Ritchie considers how we can unify the language of skills and embed them into the curriculum

**E**ven before Covid-19 struck – if you can recall a time with no pandemic – changes in technologies, and business models were underway. Commentators were regularly emphasising the importance of ‘skills’.

Colleges have responded to the pandemic at pace, developing and implementing imaginative and innovative ways to ensure that their learners continue to develop underpinning skills and achieve qualifications. The pandemic has shown the importance of colleges in meeting the needs of learners and communities.

The language and accreditation of skills includes many definitions and descriptions. We talk about ‘soft’ skills, ‘core’ skills, employability’ skills, and now ‘meta’ skills. It is now even more important to consider and develop opportunities to unify the language of skills and introduce them into the curriculum in a way which is welcomed and recognised by employers, qualification bodies, education providers and learners.

This, against the backdrop of a wider discourse about what skills will be needed for the future workforce and the success of Scotland’s economy, building on and continuing to strengthen relationships between employers and providers.

LinkedIn’s latest *Workplace Learning Report* highlights that the majority of talent spotters

will focus on leadership and management skills, creative problem solving, design thinking, and communications skills.

Research shows that many important future skills needs are related to how people think and behave at work, and suggests that critical thinking, negotiation and leadership skills will become key areas for future development. Indeed, many employers and training providers are already talking about the need for an organic approach in which skills are allowed to emerge and develop naturally.

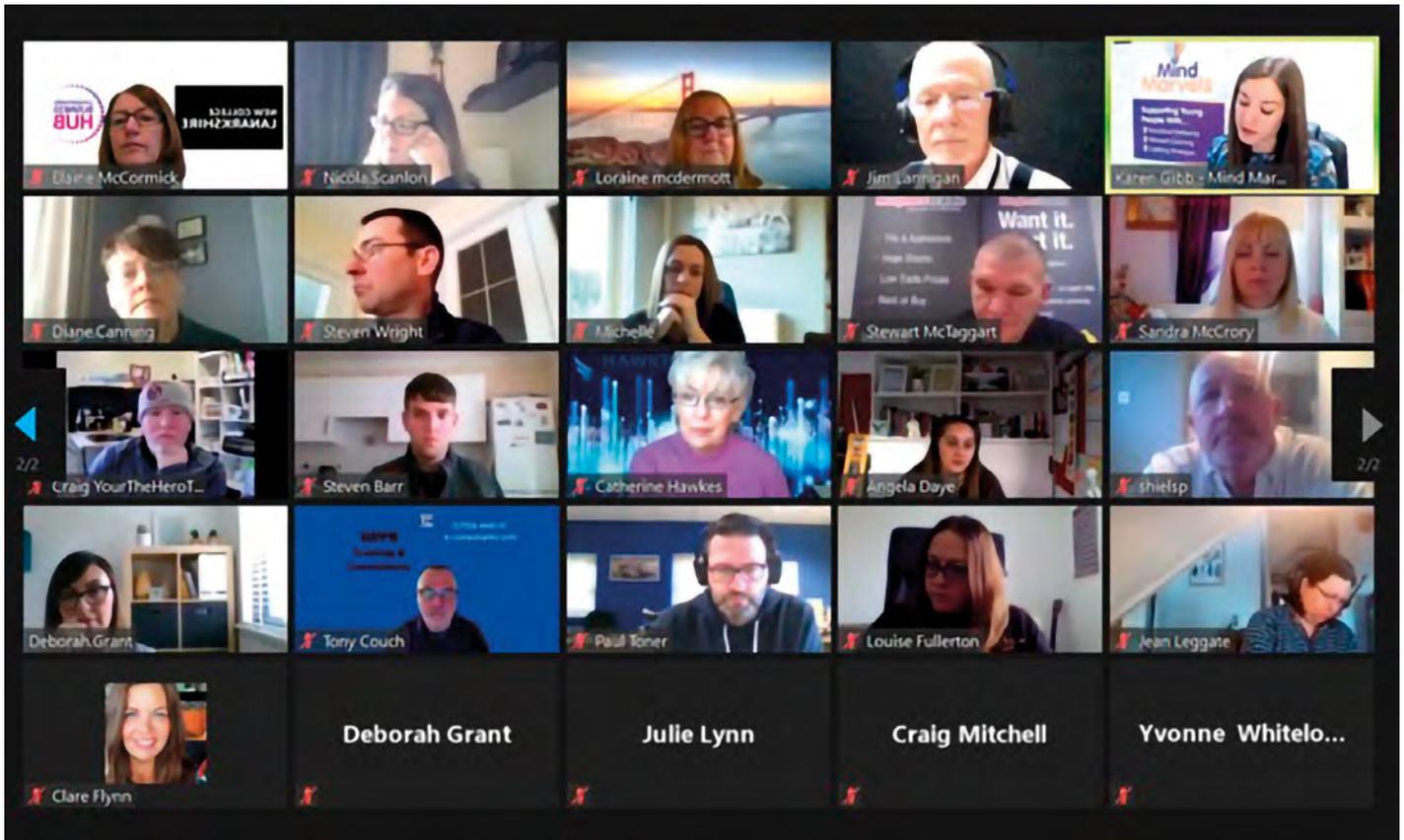
It was my pleasure to be part of the judging panel on behalf of Education Scotland for the many wonderful entries for the 2020 CDN College Awards, showcasing how colleges are supporting learners to develop skills, and employability skills in particular, in creative and innovative ways. On behalf of Education Scotland, I extend my warm congratulations to the colleges whose submissions were ‘highly commended’ or indeed, the worthy winners. 🌸



**Gill Ritchie is  
HM Inspector  
of Education:  
Head of Scrutiny  
at Education  
Scotland**



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# THE LANARKSHIRE CONNECTION

The New College Lanarkshire Business Hub provides a forum that brings together key partners, industry experts and the wider business community. Here we learn how it works and find out about the main benefits

**N**ew College Lanarkshire has a vision 'to support sustainable business growth in Lanarkshire through the facilitation of knowledge transfer and business networking opportunities', and the Lanarkshire Business Hub makes a direct contribution to this objective.

Hosted by New College Lanarkshire and sponsored by North and South Lanarkshire Councils, the Business Hub offers local organisations a free forum to come together to meet and share their business knowledge and experiences through networking and informative presentations.

It offers free membership, monthly events

and workshops, plus an online forum to learn, network and collaborate for the benefit of the local economy. With a current membership of more than 500 people, the Hub represents businesses from a wide range of sectors, right across the region. It has continued to operate during the pandemic, providing vital connection to the local business community.

The Hub's partners – including North and South Lanarkshire Councils, Developing the Young Workforce Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire, Federation of Small Businesses, Lanarkshire Chamber of Commerce, The Royal Bank of Scotland and Business Gateway – benefit from working collaboratively with the

college in supporting joint business engagement.

One business member said: 'This hub is one of the best-organised networking events I attend and there are always great presenters, a wide range of attendees and an opportunity to network in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.'

The Hub's first online networking event took place at the end of May 2020, and welcomed 40 members across two virtual sessions to connect, promote and discuss business strategies for surviving lockdown. This success has continued with further events focusing on key business themes like business innovation/diversification, resilience, business support/funding, skills development and economic regeneration.



Deborah Grant, Head of Commercial Business Development at New College Lanarkshire, said: 'Despite missing our usual breakfast roll, feedback continues to be very positive with attendees benefiting from the opportunity to access expert advice and guidance and share their experiences with people from different organisations.'

'There has never been a more important time for New College Lanarkshire, businesses and key partners in Lanarkshire to come together in supporting each other to ensure the recovery of the local economy.'

Focused online business listening events have also been hosted, with the purpose of understanding the changing needs of business and how the college can support them, aligning the future curriculum accordingly.

To support the immediate identified needs of business, NCL provided access to free online training and workshops in areas like digital skills, health and safety. Provision was expanded to incorporate key themes such as business resilience, leading through change/remotely, staff mental health and use of digital technologies. This

helped to ensure that people within organisations felt more confident and better equipped to operate in a changing environment. A newly dedicated business facility in Hamilton was also established to provide a safe and welcoming environment where essential face-to-face business training could take place.

The business impact of these developments are already being realised. Michael Devlin from Ascensos, said: 'Due to the college being able to conduct courses online this year, it has enabled our business to provide key skills to our employees which are vital for their job roles while continuing to stay safe and work at home.' 🌟

## BENEFITS OF LANARKSHIRE BUSINESS HUB

- One-stop shop to tap into expert advice and support from college academic staff, and business development team
- Access to expert industry talks and workshops in areas including procurement, innovation, managing change, and apprenticeships
- Networking opportunities
- Access to a talent pipeline, workforce development solutions and funding
- Shaping the curriculum with employers to address future workforce needs
- Showcases learner talents, e.g. WorldSkills UK winners
- Opportunities for students to gain work experience and employment with members
- College staff benefit from CPD opportunities, with direct access to industry experts.

# CARING FOR OUR CARERS

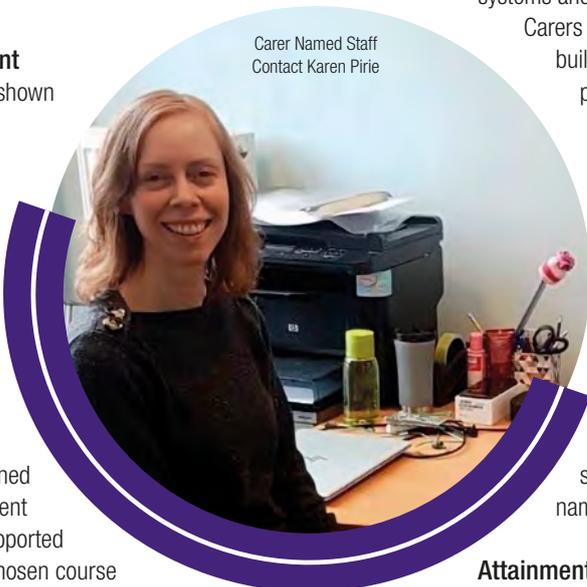
**Rose Harkness, Head of Student Services at South Lanarkshire College (SLC), explains how the East Kilbride based college supports student carers to achieve their full potential**

**A**t South Lanarkshire College, we are passionate about providing an equal and inclusive environment for our staff and students who have caring responsibilities. We recognise the challenges that carers face when balancing competing commitments and we welcome engagement and advice on how we can continue to develop our support services.

Alongside being a 'Carer Positive Employer', in April 2020 we were one of the first colleges in Scotland to receive the 'Going Further for Student Carers: Recognition Award'. This award recognises the significant effort and energy invested right across our college, to support our student carers to achieve their full potential. It shows that SLC is an inclusive place to study and a place where student carers are valued and supported throughout the academic year. Work undertaken on this award has created positive dialogue for both staff and students, and allowed an environment of collaboration and empowerment.

## Staff commitment

Staff at SLC have shown their commitment and dedication to creating a diverse and inclusive environment by reflecting, collating, reviewing and implementing support services. These support services are designed to ensure our student carers are well supported throughout their chosen course of study. As outlined in our Strategic Framework, we value an 'inclusive and diverse'



Carer Named Staff  
Contact Karen Pirie

environment where all students can learn and thrive.

Our Student Association has been incredibly important in creating and fostering excellent relationships with student carers in various ways, including treating student carers to a free Christmas dinner. The impact of this initiative was two-fold: it provided an opportunity for student carers to meet their peers and share experiences, fostering a sense of belonging; and it also reiterated the value placed on the student experience for those with caring responsibilities.

Using the already established college systems and guidance from

Carers Trust Scotland, we built on our existing processes to ensure student carers can self-refer via the Student Portal. Students can do this at any point throughout the year, and they will receive support from their named staff contact.

## Attainment

We closely monitor the attainment levels of our student carers. This is also



discussed at College Board Meetings and at weekly College Leadership Team meetings.

This data is crucial to gauge the success of our support strategies and is used to help shape future services and continue to improve overall outcomes.

170 students disclosed that they had caring responsibilities in the academic year 2018-19. Attainment levels for student carers in 2018-19 was 83%. This figure should be seen in comparison to our overall attainment level for all learners which was 80% (SFC data: February 2020). This is also significantly increased on the previous years' attainment levels, whereby, it was 66.9% in the AY 2016-17 and 69.7% in the AY 2017-18. This is an outstanding achievement, and we are immensely proud of our student carers. It shows that the college's adopted approach to support equity for student carers is resulting in a high level of attainment.

## Supporting campaigns

We are always keen to raise awareness of national campaigns and utilise this as an opportunity to promote support services, both within the college and the community. For Carers Weeks in June 2020, we pledged our support and joined the Pledge Wall to recognise, support and celebrate carers.

We were invited to share our experience of working towards the Recognition Award at the Carers Trust Learning Exchange conference in

November 2020.

We recognise the importance of partnership working with the local community, ensuring our students and staff are aware of all the support services available to them outside of college. This can include monthly stalls from South Lanarkshire Carers Network, to working closely with Carers Trust Scotland. Last year, our Student President volunteered to assist at the Young Carers Festival, so that she could learn more about how best to support our student carers, and to better understand their experiences.

Over recent months, while staff and students have been working or learning remotely, we acknowledged the importance of maintaining contact with those who had caring responsibilities. Our named staff contact sent regular email updates from our partners with regards to updates during lockdown that may have impacted them, as well as reminding them of the support available from the college should they require it. We understood that trying to balance caring responsibilities and working from home for coursework or employment presented new challenges, and we were committed to letting our staff and students know we were there to assist them, if they needed us.

We are fully committed to encouraging people with caring responsibilities – both staff and students – to inform us of their caring responsibilities so that we are better able to support them when required. I am proud to be part of a team that supports an inclusive environment for our staff and student carers. 🌈

One of the values held by the college, outlined in the Strategic Framework, is that we are “a listening organisation” and this can be evidenced in our Strategic Outcomes for supporting student carers. We value their contribution to developing the current support services that are in place for student carers, and identified the following four outcomes in response to this:

- 1. I am identified, respected and involved
- 2. I have had a positive learning experience at the college
- 3. The college looks after my physical and mental wellbeing
- 4. I can balance my college life and caring role.

Find further details about South Lanarkshire College's Strategic Outcomes, as well as additional resources for support, on their dedicated webpage for student carers: [www.south-lanarkshire-college.ac.uk/life-at-slc/student-services/carers](http://www.south-lanarkshire-college.ac.uk/life-at-slc/student-services/carers)



Student President Gemma McClarence with the college's Carers Trust Award

# WHOLE-COLLEGE WELLBEING



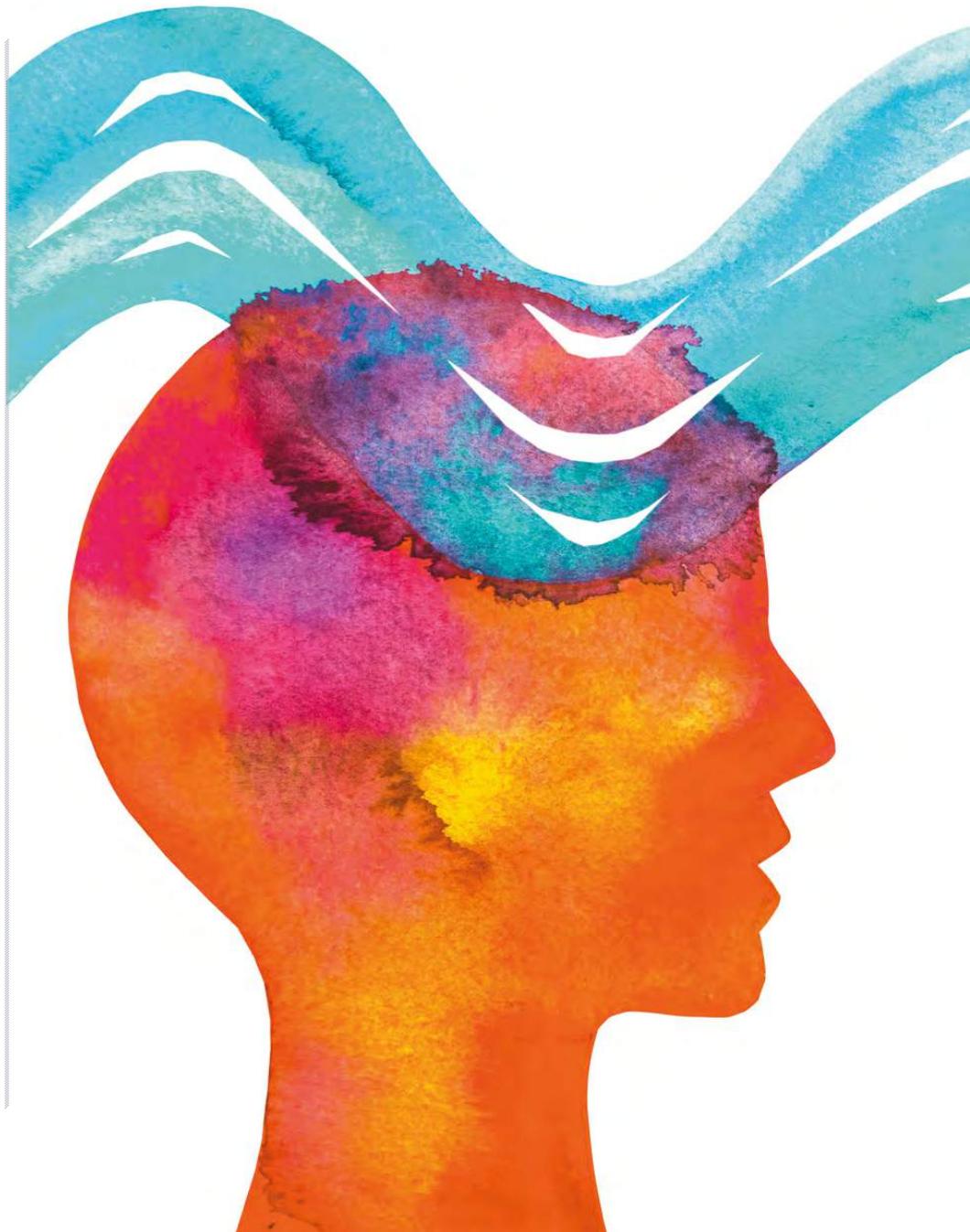
**Sandy MacLean, Curriculum and Teaching Lead at CDN, applauds the work of the college sector in supporting student mental health and wellbeing, and considers the impact of deprivation on mental health**

**F**or many years Scotland's colleges have prioritised student mental health and wellbeing, but more recently there has been an increasing focus on this as a strategic priority driven by policy and funding requirements.

Mental health and wellbeing provision in colleges typically encompass support for those experiencing poor mental health and broader proactive and preventative programmes and activities, to promote student mental wellbeing. This activity covers a range of support services and initiatives and was very much the picture before coronavirus arrived on our shores and turned life as we know it upside down.

At CDN, we responded to the challenge by moving all our networks online and greatly increasing the frequency of our meetings so that colleagues could ask questions, share practice and problem solve as we moved into an uncertain future. We were in awe of the way the sector responded so quickly and effectively in adapting their mental health and wellbeing services to be delivered remotely and flexibly to best meet the needs of students.

This included counselling sessions being offered online, predominately via Microsoft Teams, or secured Zoom – as well as by email or over the phone, with some students reporting that they preferred engaging in counselling or wellbeing support digitally. Many colleges supplemented their mental health and wellbeing services with virtual platforms such as Togetherall, a clinically managed online platform providing peer-to-peer support, or Silvercloud, a mental and behavioural health digital platform for self-help and resilience building.



## Digital poverty

However, the last few months have shone a light on digital poverty, not a new issue, and the impact of this on student mental health support. Some students have limited or no access to digital technology and in some rural areas, unreliable internet access. With the help of additional funding, colleges have come up with a variety of creative solutions to address this issue, but it remains a challenge. We are already aware that mental health conditions are disproportionately affecting the most deprived students, and digital poverty will inevitably exacerbate persistent mental health inequalities.

In the early days of lockdown colleagues reported that the key issues facing students were practical, such as financial worries, job loss and real uncertainty around assessments and qualifications. It was interesting to note that in some cases referrals to counselling services

significantly decreased with some colleges reporting that for the first time, they had no waiting list.

Where students were already engaged with mental health and counselling services, they were presenting with more acute and complex issues and greater levels of anxiety. Colleges were also seeing an increase in students engaging with wider wellbeing and support services, but were mindful of the need to reach out to vulnerable and socially isolated students who were not engaging in services.

## Counselling

It was anticipated that as the months have gone on there would be a significant increase in demand for counselling and wellbeing services in the new academic year. This has proved to be the case, but colleagues have also voiced concern that some students have not had access to

private spaces to have confidential conversations with counsellors or support while at home. This intersects with growing concerns around the rise of gender-based violence during lockdown, and students being unable to access mental health or safeguarding support.

The last year has highlighted more than ever the importance of a whole-college approach to support student and staff wellbeing, the greater interconnectivity across support services during this emergency, and enhanced communication and cross-referrals. There have been fantastic examples of colleges taking a holistic approach to supporting health improvement activity, enabling the whole community to foster good mental, physical and emotional health and wellbeing. Going forward, this is essential if we are to mitigate against the long-term mental health impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. 🌈



## POLICY AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The Scottish Government published its ten-year mental health strategy<sup>1</sup> in 2017, including a focus on further and higher education and a commitment to supporting NUS Scotland to further develop Think Positive, Scotland's student mental health project.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcome Agreements (OAs) from 2019-20 (SFC, 2019a; SFC, 2019b), required colleges to develop an institutional student mental health strategy and work with the NUS Think Positive initiative, and their student associations to develop Student Mental Health Agreements (SMHA).

The Scottish Government announced additional funding to support 80 additional mental health counsellors in colleges and universities to be distributed and monitored by the SFC from 2019-20<sup>2</sup>.

The SFC announced additional funding to support the wider wellbeing agenda, enabling students to have access to a wider range of support to help them deal with the mental health impacts of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic (Nov 2020)<sup>3</sup>.

1. Scottish Government (2017)

2. [www.sfc.ac.uk/news/2019/news-77391.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news/2019/news-77391.aspx)

3. [www.sfc.ac.uk/news/2020/news-82181.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news/2020/news-82181.aspx)



# MENTAL HEALTH UNITED

Ayrshire College's award-winning Mental Health United is a student-led initiative which has had reach across the college community and beyond. Here we learn about how they did it and the impact it has had

**M**ental Health United is a physical activity initiative that has been developed by students to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the students, staff, and wider community within Ayrshire.

According to a report in *The Herald* in September 2018, Scotland has the highest

suicide rate in Britain, with an overall suicide rate of 13.9 per 100,000 population, and suicide is one of the main causes of death among young people. In East Ayrshire alone, suicide levels doubled in a 12-month period. In the town of Cumnock, with a population of 12,000, eight young people took their own lives in a six-month period. Many of these young

people were students of, or had connections with Ayrshire College, through family and friends.

Mental Health United was set up by a group of HND students in response to this mental health crisis, to highlight and address related issues. Rather than focusing on the negative feelings people can face, the group wanted to promote the positive therapeutic benefits of



The #PassingPositivity group, pictured with Kris Boyd

singer Amy Macdonald. Other TV and sports personalities recorded video messages using #PassingPositivity, which were spread globally.

The online media campaign gained huge attention, and the event itself was a massive success. In terms of social media activity, newspaper coverage and student and community involvement, it is the most successful event the college has ever hosted.

### Community engagement

Since the event, the college has widened its Mental Health United offering to include:

- An inclusive dance group
- A care-experienced club
- Para football
- A weight loss programme for school-aged children in conjunction with the NHS
- An older adult fitness group
- Expanded football provision to include a boys and girls soccer school.

All activities are free, and all kit is supplied free of charge. This is part funded by the college, along with kit manufacturer Kelme, and kit supplier OnlySport.

In partnership with the Kris Boyd Charity, the college offers free Mental Health, Mental Strength workshops, delivered by leading life coach and therapist Kevin Mullin.

These sessions are available to staff, students, community partners and the public. The sessions take place in the communities where it can reach the most vulnerable.

The project also led to the production of a Mental Health Anthem, written by a music student

at the college and sung by former student and Britain's Got Talent winner Jai McDowall.

The coronavirus lockdown in March 2020 had a major impact on the planned activities, but one key event that went ahead was Walk4Lionheart. Adrian, a former student who was actively involved in our campaign, sadly fell victim to suicide. The students decided to honour his memory by organising a virtual charity walk between the college's campuses. Thousands of people participated worldwide, a tremendous gesture by many who wanted to pay their respects and make a difference.

The group is determined. The students say: 'We will continue to grow; we will continue to make a difference to many. We will keep #PassingPositivity.' 🌟

social interaction and participation offered by sport and physical activity. They came up with the concept of #PassingPositivity which was used to promote their campaign through social media.

The Mental Health United project was fully underpinned by SQA units embedded within the curriculum. The initiative gave the students the opportunity to deliver a real-life ground-breaking initiative, but also to make a difference to the college and wider community. None of this would have been possible without the desire and commitment of the students to drive this project and engage their fellow students, staff, and community partners. The Ayrshire College mantra is 'Raising Aspirations, Inspiring Achievement and Creating Opportunities' – these students certainly did this.

### Strong partnership

By working with community partners, the college was able to create a more co-ordinated and effective approach to highlighting the stigma of mental health, and to offer positive alternatives.

A strong partnership was established with ex-Rangers striker Kris Boyd, who lost his brother to suicide. Working with Kris, Mental Health United organised a high-profile mental health awareness day which culminated in a charity football tournament (see photo above). Proceeds raised were donated to the Kris Boyd Charity.

Kris was there to lend his support, along with former Kilmarnock FC footballer Andy McLaren and the Scottish Football Association's (SFA) Head of Community Development Paul McNeill, who fronted the SFA's 'Football Saved My Life' campaign.

The Sport and Fitness students' event aimed to raise awareness of the benefits that physical activity can have on a person's mental health. The students received messages of support on social media for the campaign around mental health awareness in Ayrshire, from celebrities including Outlander actor Steven Cree, WWE wrestler Drew McIntyre, and



# WE NEED A NATIONAL APPROACH TO LIFELONG LEARNING

**Alan Sherry argues that the time is right to create an integrated tertiary education sector to provide a national, systemic approach to supporting individuals and communities within a culture of lifelong learning**

**T**he role of education in contributing to a fairer society has always been complex. When successful in widening participation in learning, its contribution is powerful and positive. However, too often it can have the opposite effect of being socially selective, reinforcing inequality.

Policy strategies should support inclusion and participation while tackling out-dated forms of selection to create cohesive and coherent lifelong learning systems. In 21st-century society, this long-standing goal of equity in education has new urgency. With a rapidly changing world, educational equity can no longer be addressed only in terms of what happens in schools and colleges, but in many different settings and throughout our lives. Governments require to be considerably more ambitious in making lifelong learning available to all. The major challenge is that lifelong learners tend to be those who have already been successful in initial education.

As economies and societies are increasingly knowledge-based, the cost of missing out on learning becomes a high one. This is amplified by the decline in low-skill jobs, which have traditionally employed those with few qualifications. Secondly, as information and communication technologies (ICT) spread into all aspects of our lives, digital poverty has become another factor in exclusion which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The post-industrial society has resulted in the fragmentation of families and communities which too often means weaker social bonds and identity. Therefore, a central component of lifelong learning is that it requires to go beyond skills development by supporting social identity, networks and community engagement – the skills required for active citizenship. These are key meta-skills which enable individuals to respond to a rapidly changing environment.

## Digital divide has deep social roots

There is evidence that access to computers and the internet is linked to social advantage, ethnic and educational background, and even where someone lives. Access is important but there is a risk of the digital divide being oversimplified. Instead of being narrowly technological, addressed through investing in more computers and internet connectivity, it has deep social and educational roots requiring a broad range of policies. Wider access to ICT is needed in libraries and community-based learning centres. Furthermore, developing confidence in ICT skills and knowledge for all learners and the staff who support them is essential.

Inequalities persist past schooling and immediate post-school education. Participation in adult education tends to follow closely the patterns of success in initial education, with the result that inequalities among

individuals grow even wider as they progress into adulthood. The same holds true for participation in job-related training, as employers devote significantly more resources for training high-skilled, well-educated employees than others, reinforcing skill differences and often socio-economic advantage.

The CLD sector contends that there is now an opportunity arising from this ever-changing environment, and the pandemic, to create an integrated tertiary education sector which provides a national, resilient, systemic approach to supporting both individuals and communities. This approach to 21st-century lifelong learning would utilise all three aspects of CLD (adult learning, community development and youth work), implementing Scottish Government policies, while working in partnership with colleges to obtain maximum benefit from the public investment in tertiary education.

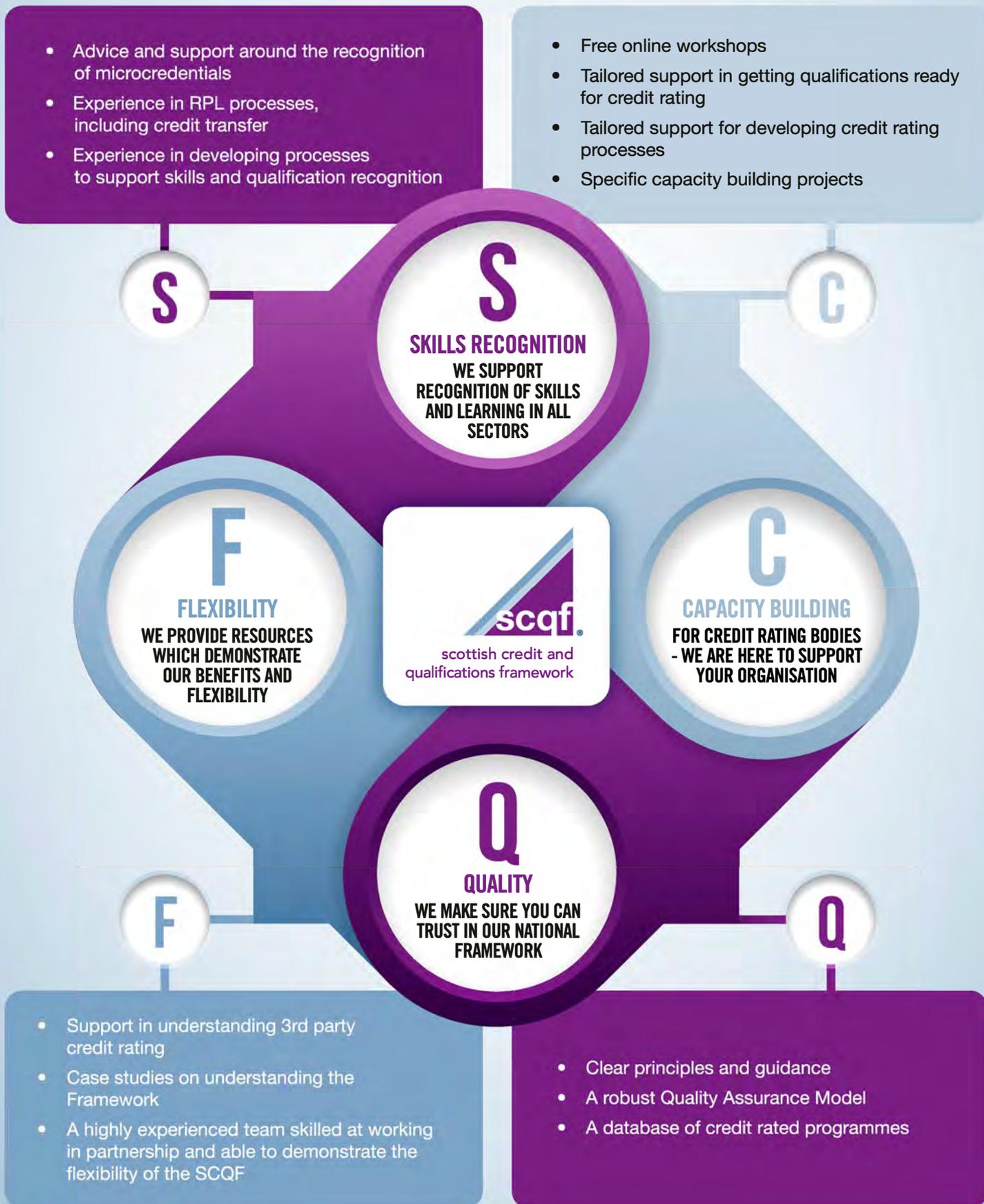
## Opportunity

This requires an overarching lifelong learning strategy/framework which supports the development of a coherent and cohesive education system based on the principles of the 15-24 Learner Journey policy, and expanding that approach to all in order to take account of the expectation that individuals will have multiple career changes during their working life. There is an opportunity to make this happen, as in other European countries, by building on the work which is being undertaken currently in revising both the Youth Work and Adult Learning strategies. Furthermore, the review of colleges being conducted by the Scottish Funding Council (see page 34) provides scope for an innovative approach to lifelong learning to be created.

The recently published *College of the Future* report highlights the importance of both partnership working and the role of colleges in their communities. Scottish colleges often describe themselves as civic anchors without necessarily setting out what this means to the communities they serve. Now is the time to work collaboratively to produce a lifelong learning strategy/framework which implements an approach to learning that supports each learner's individual and social development, the acquisition of skills for learning, life and work at all levels and in all sectors of education. 🌍

**Alan Sherry OBE is Chair of the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland. He was previously a college principal in Glasgow. The views in this article are his and not that of the Standards Council.**

# The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework: What we offer





**cdn**

College Development Network

**VIRTUAL**

# **COLLEGE EXPO 21**

**JUNE  
2021**

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